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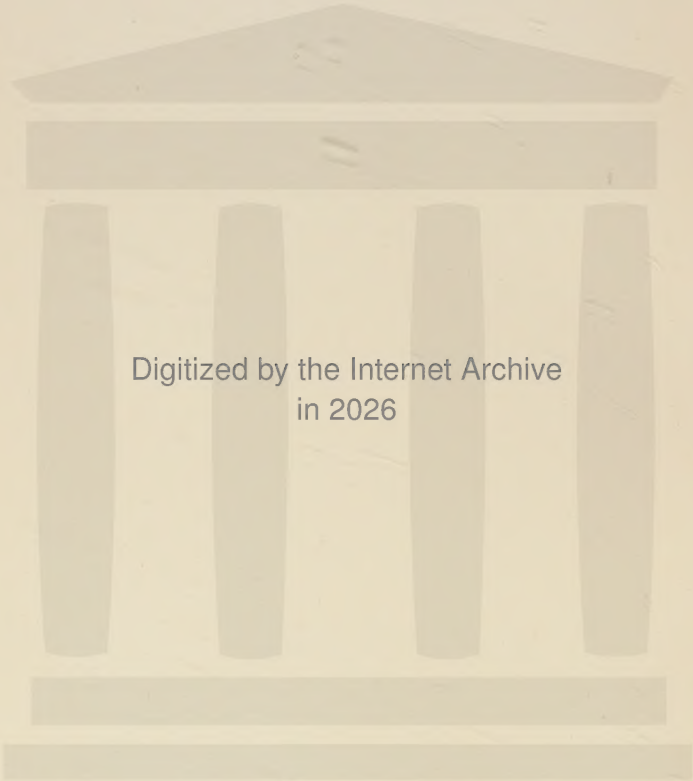
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The Collected Works of
Arthur Symons

*Volume* 7

# Tragedies

# Tragedies: Volume Two

*by* Arthur Symons

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# *THE DEATH OF AGRIPPINA*

## *A Play in One Act*

## THE PERSONS

Nero.
Burrhus.
Seneca.
Anicetus.

Agrippina.
Poppæa.
Acerronia.

Tribunes, Pretorians, Nobles, Girls, Attendants.

*The action takes place in* Nero's *Villa at Baiæ.*

*A hall, with open colonnades at the back, looking down on the sea. On the right is a door, leading into the banqueting hall.* NERO, AGRIPPINA, POPPÆA, ACERRONIA, ANICETUS, *and* ATTENDANTS *have come out from the feast and have gone towards the colonnades. The* ATTENDANT *who comes last is seen to shut the door of the banqueting hall, shutting out the sound of voices and laughter. On the left is a closed door, leading to the road.*

AGRIPPINA

If this be my true son, and these words truth,
As I have doubted, and were wise to doubt
Till I have surer proof of them——

NERO

Good mother,
If there be any proof I have not given,
If there be hid from you and known of me
Anything in Rome, anything in my heart,
Ask me, and I will answer ; but if not,
I pray you, do not doubt me.

AGRIPPINA

It is true,
You have both done me honour as a son,
And honour as a king's mother ; you have heard me
When I have counselled you ; you have done well,

And I will be a better counsellor
Than these who feasted with you ; yet, my son,
You have been hard, unjust, unpitiful,
A king and not a son to me ; if I wrong you,
I do not wrong you without cause.

NERO
What cause
I gave you I am sorry for ; how often
Have we been hard, unjust, unpitiful,
To one another : am I not your son
And are you not my mother, and is not
The blood of Cæsar and Domitius proud
And angry blood ? We are not easily friends,
Being son and mother.

AGRIPPINA
If there is in you
Anything of your father, but I think
I bred you mine, ay, to the bone and marrow,
I have much cause to doubt you ; but, my son,
It were so strange, new, and unhoped a joy
To let my heart go out to you without fear,
That I am drawn, and scarcely can withhold
The mother from my arms.
[*She holds out her arms to him.*

NERO
May I not kiss
The hands that were my cradle ? They are fine,
They are smooth yet ; may I not kiss the breast
I drank in life from ? Kings have been your lovers,
And are you not my mother ?

AGRIPPINA

I am content
That I have seen this day ; now let me go,
My son, my king. Listen ! A joyous music.
[*The sound of music is heard from the shore below.*

NERO

'Tis the feast, mother.

AGRIPPINA

Whose ?

NERO

Athena's.

AGRIPPINA

Ah !
Now I can hear the voices, and a song :
" Goddess of mercy : " that is not her office ;
What are they singing ?

ACERRONIA

It is of Orestes,
Because Athena freed him from his guilt
At Athens, when the Furies followed him.

AGRIPPINA

They followed him because he killed his mother :
How could Athena free him from his guilt
Who could not from remembrance ? A wild song ;
It passes, with the flutes and tambourines.
Is the ship ready ?

NERO

I will not let you go.
There was a thing I have not told you of.
You shall not go to-night.

AGRIPPINA

What is the hour ?

POPPÆA

It is past midnight.

NERO

You shall not go to-night.

ANICETUS

Madam, the ship is ready.

POPPÆA

The queen is tired,
And waits on sleep ; we wait not on her pleasure
Who keep her from her bed.

NERO

Do not go yet.

AGRIPPINA [*to* POPPÆA]

I thank you ; you are carefuller for me
Than I for my own self. But I am tired ;
I am tired, Nero, truly, and with this new
Labour of happiness, and I must rest.
To-night I sleep at Bauli ; I shall sleep sound.
You'll send me in your ship ? I'll go in it ;
Come. Yet, one word with you before I go.
[*They go aside.*

POPPÆA

Why did you swear that there would be a wind ?
There is no wind.

ANICETUS

Madam, there is no wind ;
But if you drop a stone into the sea,
The stone must sink.

POPPÆA

You will fail, Anicetus ;
This innocent sea will never cover up
A deed so naked.

ANICETUS

If I fail in it
Let my own shipwreck drown me.

[NERO *and* AGRIPPINA *return, talking earnestly.*

AGRIPPINA

I will send
Messengers to Octavia; that you heed
My will in this contents me; for myself
What is there I should ask?

NERO

What should you ask,
Seeing that I live in you, and am a king
Because I am your son?

AGRIPPINA

And now farewell.

POPPÆA

Farewell.

AGRIPPINA

Kiss me, my son.

NERO

If I should kiss you
Again, you'd say I am not honest with you,
Or that I feign to love you; and yet, mother,
I'll kiss you for good night.

AGRIPPINA

Come, Acerronia.

[*As* ANICETUS *points the way, and* AGRIPPINA, *followed by* ACERRONIA *and others, begins to move down the steps towards the sea, the music that had been heard before returns: and at the same moment the door of the banqueting-hall is burst open, and a troop of young nobles and women hurries out crying "Nero."*

FIRST NOBLE

Where's Nero?

SECOND NOBLE

The last cup of wine was sour.

FIRST GIRL

Where's Nero? All my violets were alive
When Nero sat among us like the sun.
Now they are dead.

SECOND GIRL

The savour went with him
Out of the courteous spices drunk with fire.

FIRST NOBLE

Come back, Nero!

SECOND NOBLE

He does not hear us. Come,
There's music by the sea ; the singing girls
Are dancing with white feet upon the sand.

FIRST NOBLE

The Queen-Mother is going to her ship ;
Let's follow, and she'll think we honour her.
Come.

FIRST GIRL

Is she really the Queen-Mother now ?
Why does the King stand looking after her
As if he did not see her, and as if
He could see nothing else ?

THIRD GIRL

Come, to the sea.

[*They follow* AGRIPPINA *down the steps in a crowd, looking curiously at* NERO, *who stands with* POPPÆA *not speaking or seeing them. Some remain on the stage, and turn back towards the banqueting-hall.*

THIRD NOBLE

Why did we leave the feast ?

FOURTH NOBLE

I followed you.

THIRD NOBLE

I was a fool to follow those young men.
First they cried out for Nero ; then they went
With Agrippina, who is going home ;
And now they follow after singing-girls.
Why did we leave the feast ?

FOURTH NOBLE

We'd best go back ;
I left a cup half-filled.

THIRD NOBLE

We are not so young
As those young men, and that's a sorry thing ;
But we are wiser ; wisdom ripens slowly
At the bottom of a jar : don't shake the jar ;
Wait, and it ripens.

FOURTH NOBLE

Let's go back and drink
Your wisdom in old wine.

THIRD NOBLE

I will go back.

[*They go back and shut the door behind them.*

POPPÆA

All's well, Nero, and now let all be done
Better than well. Can you act innocence ?

NERO

I can act anything: what would you have me act?

POPPÆA

First you must clear your eyelids of this weight,
Go back into the feast, call for more wine,
Call for flowers, call for music; and, being there,
Not dream, and not remember. Will you do this?

NERO

Poppæa, I will do it. I am now
Like the poor actor who must play his part
While his own roof-tree's burning.

POPPÆA

This night's applause,
If you should win it, crowns you the best actor
Upon the stage of the world

NERO

I will not fail;
It is a heavy and a weary part,
But I will play it.

POPPÆA

Go, and I will wait
Till Anicetus comes to bring me word
That all is well.

[NERO *goes in.* POPPÆA *is left alone. She looks towards the sea, and seems to listen. After a pause* ANICETUS *comes up the steps from the sea.*

Is all well, Anicetus?

ANICETUS

The Queen's aboard ; my rowers bend their backs,
Thinking they row to Bauli. When the ship
Touches the middle current of the bay
The timbers open under them and the sea
Pulls at their feet and drags the whole ship down.

POPPÆA

The Queen is a strong swimmer.

ANICETUS

When the ship
Opens, a beam above the cabin roof
Drops under with a weight of lead ; and he
Who falls into the water alive shall die
Of old age and not drowning.

POPPÆA

For your service
Nero shall give you gold ; for every fear
You strangle in deep water, gold and honour ;
You shall have gold of me for every hope
You bring to ripeness, if my enemy's eyes
See not the sun to-morrow.

ANICETUS

Though I serve
Nero in all things, in this thing I serve
One Anicetus, whom I answer for.

POPPÆA

What has she done against you ?

ANICETUS

But for her,
Seneca had not stepped into my shoes
These ten years since, and thrust me out of office.
I have forgotten nothing.

POPPÆA

This is well ;
So many hates must hang about her neck
Heavier than your lead. Look out to sea ;
Which is the light of the Queen's ship ?

ANICETUS

The light
Which flickers highest.

POPPÆA

That ? It seems to hang
Like a high cresset smoking from a roof.
Was that a cry ? And now the light's gone out.
Go, Anicetus, bring me word.

[ANICETUS *goes hurriedly down the steps, and* POPPÆA *remains gazing anxiously into the dark. The door of the banqueting-hall opens, and* NERO *comes slowly across towards* POPPÆA, *who comes forward to meet him.*

NERO

Poppæa,
I feel a pity creeping through my blood,
Straight to the heart; I shall weep, Poppæa, tears
Of perfect pity.

POPPÆA

I did not think your heart
So easily moved.

NERO

Nor I, Poppæa. See,
I am as tender-hearted as a child,
And weep to think on that which I have thought
Necessary to be done.

POPPÆA

Most necessary.

NERO

She was my mother: That I should speak of her
And say "She was!" She practised on my peace,
Yet was my mother. She was my enemy,
Being my mother. What is there in a word
That comes again and stabs into my side
Memory like a knife?

POPPÆA

Be bold, be bold
After the event, as when your blood was warm
To accomplish it; nothing is done till that
Cool and turn hard like iron.

NERO

Is it a woman
Who gives me no man's counsel? I would I could
Undo the deed.

POPPÆA

You would not if you could
Undo the deed. Go back into the feast.
Do you not dare go back, drink wine, sit still,
While I wait here, as I would wait, alone?

NERO

How long have I to wait, and hardly breathe?
Do you not see, Poppæa, that the night
Waits, like an awful minister of death,
Silently, and the open eyes of heaven
Are watching to behold that thing which now
Is to be done under the sleepless moon?

POPPÆA

The night is like a day; there is no wind,
The sea is white, and not a breathing ripple
Sighs over on the sand.

NERO

If I should look
Upon the sea, one horror would be there,
Like this lean horror growing like a tree
Out of the rooted poison in my soul.

POPPÆA

Think no such thoughts ; be merry ; drink this wine.

NERO

Will it not taste of blood ? I cannot drink it.

POPPÆA

So sick already ? Would you if you could
Repent again ? You would not if you could
Call Anicetus back, undo the deed,
Unking yourself.

NERO

I fear—more than the deed,
The undoing of it, yet I fear the deed.

POPPÆA

This is some play you act in that obscure
Theatre of your soul ; act not too well :
The actor grows the part.

NERO

If I should live
To be Orestes, driven about the world
By household furies ; if I should lose my sleep,
Hunger and thirst, and all that nature gives
To fill the vacancy of time, which else
Aches full with thinking ; if I should forget
All, but to-night, and this one endless night,
Night after night, making a night of day,
Recur, and be my lifetime ; if——

POPPÆA

No more.
Let days to come write their own chronicle;
But you, sleep and forget.

NERO

Your hands are clean,
But I have done a deed at which the world
Shall wonder and turn pale; I have gone beyond
The common bounds of evil: I have killed
My honour among men, given up my right
To the common warmth and shelter of the earth;
And yet you bid me sleep!

POPPÆA

You may sleep sound,
Now, and now first; you have given sleep to Rome,
Because no woman stirs that civil strife
Which keeps men from their beds.

NERO

It is for this,
And the gods know it, that I have done this thing;
And I will pay the price. Give me the wine;
I'll drink it.

POPPÆA

Drink; be strong.

NERO

I am strong to bear
The utmost pang of nature.

[*As he drinks, a* MESSENGER *enters hurriedly from the sea-steps, followed after a moment by* ANICETUS.

MESSENGER

My lord, my lord!

NERO

What is this hasty villain?

MESSENGER

Most gracious lord!

NERO

Speak then.

MESSENGER

Your noble mother——

NERO [*dropping the cup*]

Do not say it.

MESSENGER

May I not speak good news?

NERO

Speak, and be dumb !

MESSENGER

Your noble mother has escaped alive
Out of a perilous shipwreck, and she sends
To bid you have no fear for her ; she is well,
And means to seek her home.

ANICETUS [*coming forward*]

'Tis true, my lord.

NERO

My guard, Seneca, Burrhus, all of you,
Where's Burrhus ? bring him quickly ; Seneca,
It is a plot against me ; seize this man :
He comes to kill me.

[SENECA, BURRHUS, *and guards have rushed in, and come forward while he speaks.* NERO *goes up to the man, clutches him, and stealthily drops a dagger between his feet.*

What is that ? a dagger,
See there, between his feet !

MESSENGER

My lord, my lord,
I am innocent.

NERO

Seize him, I say.

[*The guards seize him and drag him away.*

MESSENGER

My lord!

NERO

Let him be silenced. Am I not safe from foes
Even in my palace? who will be my friend?

SENECA

Cæsar has only friends.

BURRHUS

What has he done?

NERO

I am undone, undone; my mother lives
To seek my death; this villain whom you saw
Came for revenge; she has a fear of me
That now will prove most deadly. She will say
I sought her death, she will outcry the winds
With clamour of her wrongs; she will shake Rome
Though she were crushed beneath it. There remains
One thing, and one thing only. Which of you
Will speak the word, and do it?

[*There is a silence.* BURRHUS *and* SENECA *look at one another, and glance aside at* ANICETUS.

Seneca?
Burrhus? Are both these traitors? am I lost?

SENECA

Burrhus, you have the guards.

BURRHUS

Not for this work.
Let him who planned it end it.

ANICETUS [*coming forward*]

As I will.

NERO

He gives me back my kingdom. Sirs, take note
It is a freedman, and no man of you,
Who makes me master here.

ANICETUS

My lord, in this
I have your leave?

NERO

Hasten, good Anicetus,
Take what lies readiest to your hand, but go
Quickly, and bring me word—that's not enough—
Token, that all is well.

ANICETUS

When all is done,
I will bring token, Cæsar, that all's done.
[*He goes out, followed by his men.*

BURRHUS [*aside*]
Come, Seneca, here's nothing to be said,
Nothing to be done yet; there's no room here
For you and me till all this deadly work
Is over; then, if Nero calls for us,
We must come back again, and, if we can,
Save him.

SENECA [*aside*]
We cannot save him.

NERO [*crossing to them*]
Seneca,
You fed me with the chaff of words: speak now.
Burrhus, you were my sword; your hand is slack,
And trembles from the hilt. You, both of you,
Old, wise, unready, foolish, I have done
Justice myself, and, for my justicer,
No more than Anicetus. Get you gone
With all unfaithful servants. You have seen
This peril of my life and of my throne,
And have not lifted finger. Get you gone.
No, stay and answer me. You, Seneca,
Who have the craft of wisdom, speak.

SENECA
My lord,
There is no good nor evil to the man
Who knows what good and evil are; he knows
How to bring evil things to a ripe good.
If this thing be indeed, as it may be,
A justice more than justice, good shall come
Out of the evil in it, and survive.

NERO

Words, words ; is this philosophy ? get you gone.
[SENECA *goes out slowly.*
Burrhus shall answer me.

BURRHUS

The people shall,
I fear, my lord.

NERO

The people ? a beast whose maw
We cram with corn, whose gullet, like a sink,
Flows over with foul blood ; we give it corn,
Blood, iron bars, the whip, and hollow words :
It licks the hand that feeds it.

BURRHUS

It has teeth.

NERO

Go to the guard ; gather them : wait without.

BURRHUS

I go, my lord.
[*He goes slowly towards the door.*

NERO

Go quickly. [*To* POPPÆA.] Do you think
Anicetus will fail twice ?

POPPÆA

My life on it,
He will not fail.

NERO

But he must bring me proof:
I have not known a night that went so slow.
But he must bring me proof. If he should come
And say, I have done this, and lie to me,
And she should live to shame me! She has craft
And an imperial pride: she will not die,
She'll not consent to die. The second time
She will come in, not answering a word,
And banish her accusers. It's not possible
That she'll accept of death from such a slave
She will beat down the eyes of all his swords,
She will walk through the swords, and come to me
And smile her dreadful smile. She will come in——

[*A sound of feet is heard; he pauses, listens, clutches hold of* POPPÆA, *and says in a terrified whisper:*

She is coming!

[ANICETUS *and his men appear at the top of the steps leading up from the sea, and the body of* AGRIPPINA, *covered from head to foot, is brought in on a litter. It is set down and* NERO *slowly goes up to it, uncovers the face, and gazes on it in silence. The door of the banqueting-hall is thrown open, and the feasters come out, at first slowly, then more quickly.*

THIRD NOBLE

Who has called us from the feast?

SECOND NOBLE

Someone is dead.

FOURTH NOBLE

Who is it that is dead?

FOURTH GIRL [*behind*]

What is it?

NERO [*in a low monotonous voice*]

She was very beautiful.
This is the first time that I dare look close,
And not be chidden. She is not angry now,
Nor sad, nor fond; but she is beautiful.
Was it not necessary for her to die
That I should see her as she was, and know
How beautiful she was? When we are dead
Men see us as we are, but, while we live,
As we would have them see us. I forget
If this dead woman were my enemy
Or I had cause to reverence her. Now
I reverence her dead.

THIRD NOBLE [*aside*]

Do you mark that?
He gazes on her in an ecstasy,
And dreams, not sees her.

FOURTH NOBLE [*aside*]

Is he a man ?

THIRD NOBLE [*aside*]

Ah, no,
A poet, and afraid.

NERO

Take up the body ;
Come, we must burn this precious thing with fire,
And render it to the gods. Come.

[*The bearers raise the litter and carry it out slowly, through the door on the left :* NERO *walks beside it with his eyes on the face of* AGRIPPINA, *as if in a dream. He is followed by* POPPÆA, *and by some of the feasters.*

FOURTH NOBLE

What is this ?
Must we see this, and yet keep silence ?

THIRD NOBLE

Ay,
She that keeps silence now, beyond the door,
Talked once : she will not say another word.

First Girl

Is this an honest death ?

Second Girl

They say 'twasdrowning.

First Girl

There was blood upon the sheet that covered her.

Fourth Noble

How did she die ? There's surely some man honest
That knows and that can tell us how she died.

Sixth Noble

That can I tell, if you will bear with me
And suffer the whole truth.

Fourth Noble

Speak, tell us all.
You saw her die ?

Sixth Noble

Would I had seen it not.
The sea had cast her up upon the land,
And would not be her slayer ; and the land
Mocked her with hopes of safety ; for there came
The people flocking round her full of joy,

Crying her name, and crying on the gods
For pity and good help ; and she had come
From the sea's edge not many paces yet,
Because the people thronged her in their care,
When, suddenly, like a more deadly sea
The billow of Anicetus and his men
Broke on the people, and broke through, and chased
The succour and the joy ; and all fell back,
And fled hither and thither ; and she stood,
Fearless, and faint yet from the buffeting sea,
And spoke the name of Nero. At that name,
That name her death, " Strike " Anicetus cried,
" For Nero ; " and she, knowing her death sure,
Would not bow down her head, but, choosing it,
" Strike here ! " she cried, and offering the womb
That had born Nero to the shameless swords
That did the will of Nero, she embraced
Death like a lover.

Fifth Noble

Can any man do this
And go unpunished ? Are there gods in heaven
Or men on earth that these things can be done
And we stand here and suffer them ?

Sixth Noble

Why, no less.
There is a splendour in the height of crime
That blinds the eyes of men, or turns the sight
To admiration.

FIFTH NOBLE

How can this one man,
Who has wronged all men, live, and none of all
Whom he has wronged strike back one blow for Rome?
It is not Cæsar's guards: one man who gives
His life for Cæsar's ends him; and what Roman
Puts such a price upon his single life
Which he will stake in battle in one hour
Twenty times over, and for Cæsar, whom
He holds a tyrant?

THIRD NOBLE

It is not that he reigns
By divine right of lineage: equal right
Was Cæsar's and Britannicus'.

SIXTH NOBLE

It is
A dizzy glory seated in this height
Of inaccessible evil. He shall reign
Till he destroy Rome utterly, and fall
Only with Rome.

FIFTH NOBLE

May Nero——

SIXTH NOBLE

Hush! he comes.

[NERO *returns, with* POPPÆA, ANICETUS, *and the others who have gone out with him. He stands still, and looks around him.*

NERO

Were we not at a feast? You are all dumb.
Bring me a cup of wine. Why do you stand
As if you waited? I say there's nothing now
To wait for any more.

SERVANT [*offering a cup*]

My lord, the wine.

NERO [*not taking it*]

There have been many feasts that ended so;
Fire is the end of all things; and this fire
Burns out my heart.

SERVANT [*again offering the cup*]

My lord.

NERO

I did not call you.
The feast is ended: by your leave, my lords,
Or I shall weep before you: to your beds,
And think, not without pity, of the man
Now woefullest among you; but no words,
As I am Cæsar, and can require of you
The solace of your silence. For to-night
Farewell.

POPPÆA

Kind lords, and all best friends of mine,
The gods be with you in your going.

First Lord

Come,
If the gods go not with us, sure, we leave
No gods under this roof.

Second Lord

We were wise to go
Before the feast turn evil. Who of us
Is too minute for this omniscient fear?

[*All go out.* Nero *and* Poppæa *left alone.*

Poppæa

This is well done, Nero, and greatly done,
Done like a Cæsar.

Nero

Why, this had to be;
Who is it says she might have lived? No, no,
I have done a thing her life made necessary.
Did not her hands set me upon a throne
Too narrow to be shared, and high enough
To fall from mortality? She would have thrust
The throne from under me.

Poppæa

Yet Octavia lives.
I dreamed that she was dead.

NERO

Dream no such dreams.

POPPÆA

I held her head with the long dripping hair
Thus, between both my palms ; with angry joy
I looked into her face, and she, unchanged,
Kept down her heavy, meek, and scornful lids.

NERO

You had not dared——

POPPÆA

I had not dared ?

NERO

To look
Into the eyes beneath them.

POPPÆA

Being dead ?

NERO

Poppæa, the dead live : be sure of that.
Seneca knows not of it, but I know
What I have seen, and I have seen the dead.

POPPÆA

I would that I could see them.

NERO

What, the dead?
These things must not be sought; they come to us,
They are about us, and they look on us
Out of our shadows, out of a blind wall,
Call to us out of wind, out of the sea——
[*He pauses, listens.*] O, that was not the sea! Did you not hear?

POPPÆA

I heard nothing.

NERO

Did you not hear? Now, now,
She's crying, and yet I saw the fire take hold
Upon the flesh, and suck the hollow bones.
So many hours dead, and not quiet yet!
She'll wake me with her crying, night by night,
Come to my bedside, rather like a mother
Than like an angry ghost: she kisses me
Down even to the bottom of a dream.

POPPÆA

That will be very well: she loves you still,
Or else the dead forget.

NERO

If she forgot,
That were the best; but she'll remember; why,
Her kisses were all hoarded from my lips
To come again to plague me. Do you think
Some of the dead, that were not, as she was,
Immortally full of life, do these forget?

POPPÆA

Surely the dead forget.

NERO

She will not, no,
She'll never let me sleep ; she will bring dreams.
If I should close my eyes, she would be there ;
And if I shut my ears, she would still speak.
Now the whole earth is full of her, the fire
Has not put out her spirit. There is a quick
And angry spirit more impalpable,
More like divinity, in this red wind
Than habits in the earth or in the air.
It can put out the torches of the night
That smoke about the moon ; but not her spirit.
She'll never die, and I must always live.
Where is this voice that calls me by my name,
Where ? where ? say that you hear it.

POPPÆA

I hear nothing.

NERO [*striking his forehead*]

Then it is here, within me ? I am changed,
I am inhabited. How shall I escape,
When I must flee away out of myself,
Because she is within me ?

[*He sits down and covers his face with his hands. Then, without raising his head, he says :*

It is day yet ?

POPPÆA

Be comforted ; the long, unfriendly night
Is over ; rise up and uncover your face.

NERO

Who am I that I should look upon the day ?

[*The door on the left is thrown open, and* BURRHUS, *with the Tribunes of the cohorts and the chief Pretorians, appears on the threshold.* NERO *rises. They come forward, some fall on their knees, and kiss the hands of* NERO.

BURRHUS

Hail, Cæsar : these be friends ; they bring you thanks.

FIRST TRIBUNE

Perish all traitors ; praise to all the Gods,
For Cæsar has done justice.

SECOND TRIBUNE

Praise to the gods
That have saved Rome and Cæsar.

FIRST PRETORIAN

Hail, all hail,
This justice has saved Rome ; praise to the gods.

SECOND PRETORIAN

Cæsar, we bring you thanks.

FIRST TRIBUNE

We bring you thanks.

NERO

I am a king again. Pretorians,
Tribunes, friends faithful to me, I perceive
That this long night is over, which I count
The woefullest of my life. This thing now done,
Justice has done for me; this shall bring peace,
This household woe shall bring peace to the world.

SECOND TRIBUNE

Praise be to Cæsar; praise be to the gods.

NERO

The just gods helping me, there now is nothing
I cannot hope for of my spirit, nothing
Left to the gods to thwart me with, I stand
Now at the height and pinnacle of my power,
Steadfastly immovable. I will strike all
The ages dumb with wonder. When men see
My golden forehead jostling the pale crowd
Of dim and inextinguishable stars,
They shall look up, and they shall say——

First Tribune

Was this
A god or was this Cæsar?

All

It is a god.

Nero [*raising his hands solemnly*]

I will give thanks, a god unto the gods.

THE CURTAIN FALLS

# *CLEOPATRA IN JUDÆA*

CLEOPATRA

That Herod's head
I'll have : but how, when Antony is gone
Through whom I might command it ?

*Antony and Cleopatra*, iii. 3.

## THE PERSONS

Herod, King of Judæa.
Pheroras, his brother.
Costobarus, his brother-in-law.
Hyrcanus, formerly High Priest.
Phanuel, a Priest.
Sohemus, of Iturea.
Mardian, a Eunuch.

Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt.

Iras,
Charmion, } her women.

Scene : *A hall in the Palace of King Herod in Jerusalem.* Herod *is seated with his counsellors* Hyrcanus, Pheroras, Costobarus, Phanuel, *and* Sohemus.

Phanuel

This queen, this concubine, this idolatress,
This white tenth plague of Egypt, brother's wife
And sister killer, this insatiate leech
And whore of all the Cæsars, this outspewed
Unswallowable and deadly weed of God——.

Herod

Peace ; do not prophesy against the queen.
My lords, this is the seventh day our guest,
Cleopatra, came to us from Antony ;
Seven days we have done her honour, and to-day
She will come here to take her leave of us.
The guards are ready and the litters wait.
Think well, my lords, counsel me : shall she go
With state, such as we owe our enemies,
And tribute, back to Egypt ? or shall she go
In the narrow balsamed litter of the dead,
Tribute to Antony ? Think well, my lords.

Phanuel

Cry out, the maledictions of the hills,
And dews of ague from the pools, cry out
Against this woman that shall make Israel sin.

HEROD

We must have patience, Phanuel. My lords,
All hangs upon a moment, which, once past
Returns no more. Consider who she is
Whom now I hold, whom now I hold or loose.
She covets all Judæa, as a fog
Sucks up the watery lifeblood of the earth
She has sucked up the cities of the plain
From Egypt to Eleutherus, save Tyre
And Sidon, both free cities, and she seeks
The freedom of these cities. Syria
She has already, and Arabia
She hopes for; and she comes from Antony
Gone against Artabazes, to subdue
Armenia, that he may give this woman
A kingdom for a bracelet on her wrist.
Do I not now already pay to her
Dues for Arabia, revenues for the groves
Of palm and balsam about Jericho?
One morning, with her arm about his neck,
Antony leans for kisses: which the Queen
Sadly puts by: "You love me not," she sighs.
Whereat the fond fool, Antony, with oaths
By twenty several gods, clamours "A test!"
And takes it for a kiss. O Antony
Has kissed away the world, and now the queen
Sets politic bounds to appetite, and stints
Her choicest lusts, lest, for a bankrupt love,
He snatch at no more kingdoms. Counsel me
What I shall do with this wise enemy,
Now my most perilous guest?

COSTOBARUS

Wisdom, my lord,
Were here one thing with honour: let the King
Send back the queen to Egypt; being a queen
She must have royal usage.

HEROD

What think you,
Hyrcanus?

HYRCANUS

O my son, stain not your hands
With any woman's blood: a woman's blood
Stains deeper than a man's, and hurts the soul.
This is a woman dear to Antony,
And you shall rather take the Nile from him
Than this mere toy of beauty. Men grown fond
Cling tighter to their toys than children do.

HEROD

You are old and wise, Hyrcanus, yet I know
Why you would pleasure Antony. He slew
Antigonus, who cut off both your ears,
To thrust you from the Priesthood. Poor old man,
You have been High Priest, and for a little time
You have been a King, and now, at fourscore years,
Are you so grateful still to Antony
Who lent you his revenge?

HYRCANUS

Phraates the King
Of Parthia gave me room in Babylon.
In Babylon were many Jews, and all
Reverenced me as if I still had been
High Priest and King. But I did ill to leave
Babylon, where all men reverenced me.
Here even Herod mocks me.
[*He rises.*

HEROD [*putting him back in his seat*]

No, father,
I also reverence you, I set your place
Above the place of all men at the feast,
I do you honour before all men. Come,
Have patience with me. You have not spoken yet,
Pheroras ; you are brother to me and share
My labours in the kingdom.

PHERORAS

Herod, first
Be friends with Antony, and for his sake
Seem friend to Cleopatra.

HEROD

But is she not
A poison in his bones to Antony ?
Shall I not rid him of his mortal hurt
In ridding him of Cleopatra ?

PHERORAS

Brother,
Does not a man love better than all springs
Of living water in his neighbour's fields
The poison that is sweet to his own bones?

COSTOBARUS

That you know best, Pheroras. Twice you have spurned
Herod, and his two daughters you have spurned,
And for a handmaid. Truly you cleave close
To your own poison.

PHERORAS

He who speaks to me
Speaks from a better knowledge. As a man
Puts by a woman, so your wife put by
Her husband, being the daughter of a King.
I would not for the Kings of the earth put by
My wife that was a handmaid.

HEROD

Peace, no more.
Is it a time to speak of these things now,
Or of the thing now present? You are all
Wranglers among yourselves, each for his own
And no man for the kingdom. Shall I find
Counsel in you or put my trust in you?
For I would make an end now suddenly
Of Cleopatra, and in one stroke rid
Antony of his most unfaithful friend,
Who will one day when he has need of her,
Sell him for love or safety; and myself

Of this sly enemy, this running flame
That would lick up Judæa like a field
Of windy corn.

PHANUEL
The fire of heaven lick up
The Nile and all its vermin ; winds of drought
Suck dry the Egyptian cisterns ; may the dust
Of all the desert be heaped over her,
Because of whom Israel shall surely sin.

SOHEMUS
Phanuel speaks truth.

HEROD
How so ?

SOHEMUS
Beware of her.

HEROD
Why, so I would.

SOHEMUS
Let her not come to you ;
They say she cast a spell on Antony.

HEROD
I have no fear of any woman's spell.

SOHEMUS
That's not well said, my lord. Antony said
He would not fear a woman.

HEROD

If she should die,
It were well for me and well for Antony.

SOHEMUS

If she should die, what man is there of us
Shall say to Antony : " It is for your good
That this your leman, the chief woman now
At this time in the world, has suffered death
For Herod's pleasure ? " Have a care, my lord ;
Send her alive out of the land : but look
Upon her face no more.

HEROD

You have all spoken ;
You have said wisely ; yet is it my will
To follow out my will, whether it be
Wisdom or folly. This Egyptian plague
Has cumbered the sound earth too long. She is
The idol of the world's idolatry ;
No heathen can resist her, for she has
The witchcraft of their gods ; but as for me,
My trust is in the Lord God, he is the God
Of my own people, he is the Lord of Hosts.
I will rise up in the young strength of God
And smite this ancient evil, that has wrought
So much of all the evil of the world.

[*The doors are thrown open, and an* ATTENDANT *appears.*

ATTENDANT

The Queen of Egypt and the Queen of Queens,
Empress and daughter of the Ptolemies,
Regent of Isis, Cleopatra !

[*All rise.* CLEOPATRA *enters, attended by* CHARMION, IRAS, MARDIAN, *and the others.* HEROD *moves forward to receive her, but before he has reached her,* PHANUEL *comes forward with a pointing finger, and cries out at her.*

PHANUEL

See,
The leprosy of beauty, the white sin
Her idols are upon her, Ashtaroth
Points with the horns of the white poisonous moon
Upon her forehead, Baal is in her eyes.
Beware of the accursed beauty !

[CLEOPATRA *gazes at him with a tranquil and mocking smile.*

CLEOPATRA

Sir,
Mardian my eunuch shall attend on you.
Go, Mardian, comfort him ; speak to him kindly, Mardian.

[PHANUEL *rushes out past her with uplifted arms. She turns to* HEROD]

Your counsellors are women, by these tears.

HEROD

Pardon, immortal queen : this is a voice
Which cries some sacred madness like a bird,

Not knowing what it speaks. Think it no more
Than a grey handful of the dust which rose
Against you in the desert.

CLEOPATRA

Why, so be it:
My eyes remember that, and my ears this.
These lords are courteous to me, by their looks.
Why do they stand apart?

HEROD

They do but wait
To give you homage.

CLEOPATRA [*To* HYRCANUS]

You may kiss my hand,
Old man. Ah, Costobarus, this is well.
I was your friend, and better than you thought.
Brother of Herod, also my good friend;
And you, Sohemus, be it well with you.
[*They all salute her and go out*]
Go, Iras, Charmion, go; be not far off,
Take Mardian and the others, wait without.
[*Aside.*] And look you, Iras, if you find a friend,
Sound him of Herod's purpose.
[*They all go out*]
My kind lord,
I have been your guest; I leave you; this last time
We speak together; be the lips of each
Naked as truth.

HEROD

God be my witness, lady,
I have no guile within my heart or mouth.

CLEOPATRA

Which of the gods, Herod?

HEROD

The Lord of Hosts.

CLEOPATRA

We call him Mars: a serviceable oath;
Antony swears by Bacchus, who, they say,
Repents in his own wine. He swears by him
That men may cry "The God!" They're very like;
There is an image somewhere, you would say,
'Tis Antony's big smile, and lips curled back,
And cheeks that pout and dimple to the eyes,
But still the eyes watch and the lips stand firm.

HEROD

Antony chooses well.

CLEOPATRA

You smile, my lord?
Indeed, he feasts past reason. 'Tis a fault.

HEROD

I thought of no such thing.

CLEOPATRA

'Tis very true.
I left him by Euphrates, all his mimes
Supping beside him : certain singing men
And certain dancing women. If Antony
Forgets to be a King, all's over. Hark,
There is a thing I have not told you yet :
I tire of him a little.

HEROD

This cannot be.

CLEOPATRA

Why, not so much but I'd have Antony
Rather than Cæsar ; yet Octavius stands
To be the stronger ; but no matter.

HEROD

Madam,
Antony loves you better than the world.

CLEOPATRA

Is not that why I begged the world of him ?
He parcels me the world, scrap after scrap,
But slowly, slowly.

HEROD

He has not promised you
Judæa yet ?

CLEOPATRA

I swear I never thought
To ask it of him ; no, by Isis, no ;
I will not ask Judæa, on my life,
Of any man but Herod !

HEROD

Yet even this
Antony gave me when I fled to Rome,
Scarcely escaped from Malchus.

CLEOPATRA

On your way
You came to Alexandria, and you fled
Into a storm from Alexandria,
Because you feared the sea and Antony
Less than a woman.

HEROD

Did I wisely ?

CLEOPATRA

If
I ask of you Judæa, have I then
Nothing to give ? You do not answer me.
Are you his servant ?

HEROD

Antony is my lord,
I am as faithful servant to him as
I hope for faithful servants.

CLEOPATRA

Antony
Is my lord also ; I have no other slave
So faithful to me as this Antony.
By Isis, I have whipped him from his throne
For having frowned upon me. You hold Antony
By serving Cleopatra.

HEROD

To his hurt ?

CLEOPATRA

To his hurt chiefly. Octavia medicines him,
I serve him for his pleasure, not his good ;
And thus I keep him.

HEROD

Shall I also keep him,
Who am no woman, nor, as women are,
Naturally inconsistent, if I wrong
The trust that holds a man bound to a man ?

CLEOPATRA.

Listen, Herod. I am not, as you think,
The thing that cries and kisses, may be bought
For kisses and for honey in the words.
I am a woman : women are that thing,
But not a queen, and not a Ptolemy,
Herod ; and not, though all the world turned lover,
The woman Cleopatra. I have played
At kisses for the world ; not with the world
For kisses.

[*There is a pause.* HEROD *looks at her intently without speaking*]

Once you willed to be a King ;
You are a King now, Herod. Are you content ?
There is a fiery craft within your eyes
That marks you for a King of more than Jews.

HEROD

So much suffices me.

CLEOPATRA

If you would bend
So low as to allow a woman's aid !
Antony does, but Mariamne—

HEROD

No,
Nothing of Mariamne !

CLEOPATRA

How you cry
" Nothing of Mariamne ! " Do my lips
Blacken her name, Mariamne, saying it ?

HEROD

A small poor private matter of my own,
So please you, madam. Pray you, let it pass.

CLEOPATRA

Because you love her ?

HEROD

For so slight a cause !

CLEOPATRA

Answer me, Herod. You, who are a King,
Prouder than any King, and in your land
You hold your wives as we our mistresses,
Are you so sure this woman whom you love
Loves you again and loves no other man ?

HEROD

I could not be more sure.

CLEOPATRA

Why, that's well said,
That's bravely said, said like a man ! That's said
As Antony might say it when he speaks
To praise Octavia.

HEROD

Has Octavia, madam,
Done Antony more wrong than to be chaste,
A keeper of his children and her house?

CLEOPATRA

That's wrong enough: she does him hurt with it,
To make all Rome his hater.

HEROD

I am content
To suffer so much hate.

CLEOPATRA

She is his wife.
Antony tempts her not. I say, think twice
Before you trust a woman once. Think thrice
Before you trust a woman while the world
Holds Antony. No, let me speak. I say
That there is not a woman born of woman
He lusts not after, and not a woman born
That would not serve his pleasure for her own,
If I were not more instant and more strong
Than Antony to content Antony.

HEROD

Then let me speak, if you will have it so.
I say there is one woman, and my wife,
Not to be tempted, not by Antony.
Not with all Rome. I have thought twice and thrice.

CLEOPATRA

You say it.

HEROD

Who should speak for me?

CLEOPATRA

Your pride:
Antony even now burns after her.

HEROD [*rising*]

He has not seen her face.

CLEOPATRA

Why do you rise?

HEROD

You test my patience, not my loyalty.

CLEOPATRA

With Antony, when women are the talk
A word suffices.

HEROD

Words I do not fear.

CLEOPATRA

Many have praised Mariamne.

HEROD

They did well.

CLEOPATRA

He doats upon her picture : is that well ?

HEROD

Her picture ? he, her picture ?

CLEOPATRA

Prays to it,
Bears it about with him, calls his friends to see,
Acquaints them with the name, who sent it him. . . .

HEROD

You lie, Cleopatra.

CLEOPATRA

Do I lie, my lord ?
[*She takes out the picture, unrolls it, and shows it to him*]
Do you deny the hand ?

HEROD [*snatching it from her, reads*]

" To Antony
From Mariamne."

CLEOPATRA

Is it her hand or not ?

HEROD

Where had you this ?

CLEOPATRA

Of Antony sleeping.

HEROD [*walking to and fro*]

Why,
God of my fathers, why must Mariamne
Be now at Cæsaræa ? I would look
Into her eyes until I found the truth
Naked. I would set this name that does commit
Adultery with this name before her face,
As here they kiss together. I would shame
Her mother in her eyes. But I must wait,
But I must wait.

CLEOPATRA

Some of her messengers
I gave to lions, some to snakes ; my beasts
Love dearly a man's flesh : they do my will
When a man's justice lingers.

HEROD [*walking to and fro*]

Always now
The mother, with her rage against my throne ;
She threats me with her graveyard lineage, thrusts
Her withered ancientness between my sight
And Mariamne. And Mariamne hears
Her voice crying against me ; and now——

CLEOPATRA

Now
She perils you with Antony, she plays
More than her honour ; it is with your life
She plays. But Herod, I will be your friend.

HEROD [*holding out the picture*]

Do you not bring me bonds from Antony ?
Is not this picture for a sign of it,
These names for seals upon it ? You are wise,
You work to pleasure Antony : are we friends ?

CLEOPATRA

Herod, I stand between your death and you ;
I am more your friend than you can think of me.
Let me but speak. Antony seeks your death
In seeking Mariamne : yet in her
Seeks but a moment's woman : while I live
Antony dares not leave me ; while I live
He never shall have Mariamne——

HEROD

Ah !
Not while you live, Cleopatra ! It is true
How strangely we forget !

CLEOPATRA

But that's not all :
Does not Mariamne long for Antony ?

We stand between them ; Herod, what shall we do
For one another ? I only am your friend,
Herod, in this ; if you will be my friend
In all things !

HEROD

Surely I will be your friend ;
I had not thought to be so much your friend.

CLEOPATRA

There have been kings have knelt to me for that
You would not for the taking. Here is my hand :
I would not that you kissed it.

HEROD

The queen's hand
I kiss ; and so I seal myself your friend
In all things.

CLEOPATRA

Why, that's well. Hark in your ear :
No man was ever yet a friend to me,
But I will be a friend to you as no man
Was ever yet my friend.

HEROD

How shall that be ?

CLEOPATRA

I have learned love in Egypt. All I know
I have not taught even to Antony;
And I know all things. Have I not learned love
In Egypt? there the wise old mud of the Nile
Breeds the dark sacred lotus, and the moon
Brims up its cup with wisdom; I have learned
The seven charms of Isis, each a charm
To draw the stars out of the sky with love;
The seven names of Apis, each a name
To stroke the madness out of cruel beasts;
And I have looked into the heart of death
And death has told me all things, and I know
How to make every hour of life as great,
Terrible, and delicious, as the hour
When death tells all things. Can Mariamne love
As I can love, Herod?

HEROD

No, not as you
Can love, Cleopatra!

CLEOPATRA

Kings have cast their crowns
Into the dust, and kings that are my foes
I can take up into my hand and cast
Into the dust, for love of me. I am a woman,
But I have power greater than any man's.

HEROD

Though you have greater power than any man,
How should it profit me?

CLEOPATRA

If you are a man,
Why do you ask? Is there not heat enough
In these chill suns that would not warm our winter
To thaw the holy courses of your veins?
How shall it profit? how if it be but
That I shall take your foes into my hands,
And bind them with the girdles of my hair,
And set them blind and bound into your hands?

HEROD

Will you bind Antony for me?

CLEOPATRA

My lord,
You gird at me with Antony. Men forget
The women whom they love; but when I love
No man forgets me. When Mark Antony
Saw me the first time, I was a child at play
In Egypt, a young child; the second time
I came to meet him into Asia,
A queen, and like a goddess. Thirteen years
Had made me and had unmade Antony,
But when he stepped between the silver oars
Into the music and the purple cloud,

His eyes remembered. Herod, since that day
He has not left me. He has a Roman wife,
A wedding-ring, and not a woman; I,
I alone hold the man who holds the world;
And Herod, I will give you Antony.

HEROD

Why should you do a greater thing for me
Than you have done for Antony?

CLEOPATRA

Because
Herod shall be . . . greater than Antony!
Am I not Cleopatra? are not you
King, yet a king whose neck takes on the yoke
Antony sets upon it, and his brow
The sorer stain a woman's lightness sets
For Antony upon it? Break the yoke,
Wipe out the stain, be lord of Antony,
And lord of Cleopatra!

HEROD

For what price?

CLEOPATRA

Herod, when you have given me the world,
I will give you more than I gave Antony.

HEROD

I am not rich enough to pay the price,
And the reward is greater than my hopes.

CLEOPATRA

Greater shall the reward be than your hopes :
As great as your deserving.

HEROD

Humbly, madam,
And gratefully, and in all things honourably,
I crave your leave to answer. As for me,
I am an Idumean, and here King
Over the Jews ; I owe to Antony
My kingdom, and my honour binds me his.
Also I am the husband of a queen,
Whom I hold fast from all men, as you hold
Antony from all women : in this thing
I take you for ally ; it profits you,
And I am profited by it : while you live
I know you never will loose Antony :
May the Queen live for ever ! As for me,
What I may do to honour you I will ;
What honour I shall do you presently
You shall not wait to hear. May the Queen live
For ever ; let there be between us two
Peace, and a long farewell.

CLEOPATRA

My prudent Herod !

[*He goes out.* CHARMION *and* MARDIAN *enter*]

Charmion, I add an altar to the God
Of Herod where the altars of my gods
Smoke not in Egypt.

CHARMION

Madam, is all well ?

CLEOPATRA

All's well enough, Charmion.
[*She starts up*]
But this dog,
This Herod swine and carrion of a Jew,
This puppet plucked by Antony, this King
Antony would unking for me, if I begged
At the right wine-warmed moment of the feast,
Or under some cool moon upon the Nile ;
This husband of a woman, whom he holds
As I hold asps in Alexandria,
For pretty, intimate deaths ! a biting thing,
Most cold and biting ! I have failed, Charmion,
And with this Jew !

CHARMION

Lady !

CLEOPATRA

When Antony
Made laws for Rome, and all the senators
Sat round him in the Forum, I do think
That, passing in my litter, I have seen
Antony rise and run to me.

CHARMION

His seat
Is empty, madam, before an eye but his
So much as sees the litter!

CLEOPATRA

Antony,
Antony's known, reckoned with; let that be.
But you have known Cæsarion's father, speak,
Mardian, if you heard Cæsar answer No
To my most idle word?

MARDIAN

I have seen Cæsar
Kneel to you, madam, and not take your Yes
So easily as a Kingdom.

CHARMION

They say, Madam,
The young Octavius, though his speech is stern,
Dreams but of Egypt.

CLEOPATRA

I am worth a Cæsar,
Charmion; the gods have made what they have made;
We'll not dispraise them. This fierce woman here
Is not ill-mated: let him keep her close;
That's well enough: she's not for Antony.
[IRAS *rushes in.*

IRAS
Madam, a plot, a plot!

CLEOPATRA
What's this?

IRAS
Beware!
They plot your death.

CLEOPATRA
Who?

IRAS
Herod.

CLEOPATRA [*with a slow smile*]
No, not Herod.

IRAS
It is from Costobarus, and I wormed
Into his heart, and he is most your friend.

CLEOPATRA
Well, what said he?

IRAS
He said, and not for nothing,
And secretly, that Herod seeks your life,
And means to kill you, and has ready now

A litter for your body, and a guard
To follow it to Egypt, for a gift,
Back to Antony, dead. O who shall save us?
He said he had pleaded for you.

CLEOPATRA

Now this is strange,
Wonderful, more than wonderful, most strange,
That not an hour, a little hour ago,
This may have been? his eyes were cold to me
With thinking of me dead. And now the guard
Is ready, and the litter waits for me,
That is to take me living. I have done well;
I have done wisely, wiser than I knew.

IRAS

O madam, must we die?

CHARMION

What shall we do?

CLEOPATRA

Tremble not, foolish child, the fear is past,
My life is more to Herod than my death;
I have saved myself; Mariamne, whom I hate,
Has saved me; and I have not wholly failed.
[*A knocking is heard at the door.*

CHARMION

Hark, what is that?

IRAS

They are coming.

MARDIAN [*dropping on his knee*]

Spare my life!

CLEOPATRA

They shall not harm you, Mardian; courage, girls,
And bid them enter.

[CHARMION *opens the door, and an armed man is seen, with other armed men behind him.*

OFFICER

In the name of the King,
To the most excellent queen! To Cleopatra,
Herod! The captains of the royal guard,
An hundred horsemen of the royal guard,
Captains with chosen spearmen, camels charged,
With five of the King's litters, wait the queen's
Most royal leisure to attend the queen
As far as Egypt.

CLEOPATRA

The King honours me.
Even so will I one day honour the King.

THE CURTAIN FALLS

# *THE TOY CART*

FOUNDED ON THE MRICHCHHAKATI OF SUDRAKA

## THE PERSONS

CHARADUTTA, *a Brahmin.*
ROHASENA, *his son.*
MAITREYA, *a Brahmin, his friend.*
SAMSTHANAKA, *the brother-in-law of the king.*
THREE GAMBLERS.
THE JUDGE.
THE PROVOST.
THE RECORDER.
TWO CHANDALAS (*public executioners*).
A MENDICANT FRIAR.
THE SERVANT OF CHARADUTTA.
VASANTASENA, *a dancer.*
RAMBHA, *her mother.*
HER MAID.
MAID-SERVANT *in* CHARADUTTA'S *house.*
CROWD, ATTENDANTS, GUARDS.

*The Scene takes place in the city of Ujjayin, in the Western part of India.*

## ACT I

*A room in* CHARADUTTA'S *house, poorly furnished, with a few books and musical instruments, a drum, a tabor, a lute, and piper, lying about. At the back is a door opening into an outer court or garden, with a wall visible at the back, beyond which is the street. The outer door is not seen. There is a curtained door at the side of the room, leading into the inner part of the house.*

CHARADUTTA

Rebhila sang exquisitely! And as for his lute, it is a sea-pearl; it was more comfortable to my heart than a friend consoling a friend for the absence of the beloved; it had a voice like the very voice of love.

MAITREYA

Well, well, for my part I am very thankful to be out of it.

[*He sits down, as if tired.*

CHARADUTTA

Rebhila surpassed himself.

MAITREYA

Now, there are two things that I can never help laughing at: A woman reading Sanskrit and a man singing a song. The woman snuffles like a young cow when the rope is

first passed through her nostrils, and the man wheezes like an old pandit who has been saying his beads till the flowers of his chaplet are as dry as his throat; and the one seems to me as ridiculous as the other.

CHARADUTTA

Is it possible that you did not admire Rebhila's marvellous skill? His voice was at once so sweet and so passionate, so flowing and yet so precise, so full of the ecstasy of delight, that I half fancied I was listening to a woman whom I could not see. And now, though the music is over, I can still hear the voice and the lute, the hurrying, rising, sinking, the pause and return of the wandering melody.

MAITREYA

The dogs were all asleep in the streets as we came back. They were wiser than we. (*Servant enters.*) Here, Vardhamana, tell Radanika to bring water and wash the master's feet.

CHARADUTTA

No, do not call her: she will be looking after the child.

SERVANT

I'll bring the water, sir, and Maitreya here can wash your feet.

MAITREYA

Do you hear this son of a slave? *He* to bring the water, and *I*, who am a Brahmin, to wash your feet!

CHARADUTTA

Well, my friend, take the water, and leave him to do the rest.

SERVANT

Come, Mr. Maitreya, pour out the water.

[*He washes* CHARADUTTA'S *feet and is going.*

CHARADUTTA

Stay, Vardhamana, wash the feet of the Brahmin.

MAITREYA

Never mind ; it is of little use ; I must soon be off tramping again, like a beaten ass.

SERVANT

Are you a Brahmin, Mr. Maitreya ?

MAITREYA

I am a Brahmin among Brahmins, as the python is a serpent among serpents.

SERVANT

Well, in that case I will wash your feet.

[*Washes them and goes out.*

MAITREYA

My very good Charadutta, do you want to know why that music went straight to your head, and has kept you ever since in the shadow of an intoxication ?

CHARADUTTA

The music, and the memory of it.

MAITREYA

Memory, that is it : it reminds you of Vasantasena.

CHARADUTTA

Vasantasena !

MAITREYA

You need not echo her name like that. Was I not with you in the garden of the temple of Kamadeva, and did you not see her, covered with gold upon gold, jingling with bracelets and anklets, like the chief actress in a new play ? And what is more, did she not see you, and did she see anyone else after she had seen you ?

CHARADUTTA

I must not think of her, Maitreya ; and indeed I have no intention of thinking of her any more.

MAITREYA

Then hear no more music, offer up rice to the gods. (*He looks out of the window.*) Here are a few small birds picking at three seeds in the garden ; there used to be storks and swans there, and enough food for them ; and forget all women, I say, forget all women.

CHARADUTTA

While Rohasena lives, how can I forget women? I love no living woman as I love the child of my dead wife.

MAITREYA

Perhaps not, but 'tis of a very different kind of love I am thinking. Vasantasena is a courtesan, and though she were the best dancer on hearts in the kingdom, and a woman of true religion, and loving to her lovers (and I neither say nor unsay any part of it), yet I would have you beware of her, and for a good round dozen of reasons.

CHARADUTTA

You are mistaken, Maitreya, both in her and in me; but you may give me your reasons.

MAITREYA

Well now, take myself. I can quite well remember in old days when I used to sit here, where we now are, but on cushions, where they now are not, and eating scented dishes until I could eat no more, like a city bull in the market-place. Now I wander about from house to house like a tame pigeon, to pick up what crumbs I can find.

CHARADUTTA

Forgive me, friend of all seasons; you are always welcome, and to my best; but it is my sorrow that I cannot now feast my friends as I did before.

MAITREYA

They feasted you out of house and home. You have a royal heart, Charadutta, and you kept a king's kitchen.

CHARADUTTA

Then it was not only my own doing, it was the loss of the royal favour.

MAITREYA

Well, you see where your friends and the present king (may his reign be brief and happy !) have brought you.

CHARADUTTA

Death would be better. Have you seen how all my friends desert me, Maitreya ?

MAITREYA

Like a cowboy, who drives his herd from place to place in the thicket, always in search of fresh pasture.

CHARADUTTA

To be poor is like dying slowly. But what has all this to do with Vasantasena ?

MAITREYA

A very great deal. Do you know that at the house of Vasantasena the porter dozes in a big chair, as stately as a Brahmin deep in the Vedas ; and the very crows, crammed with rice and curds, disdain the rice thrown to the gods ?

CHARADUTTA

And if so ?

MAITREYA [*more and more rapidly*]

The kitchen smells like the heaven of Indra, and the gateway, they tell me, to the inner court is like the bow of Indra in the sky. There are jewellers setting pearls and sapphires and rubies and topazes and other jewels ; they cut lapis lazuli, polish coral, squeeze out sandal juice, and dry saffron ; and there are men and women laughing and singing, and chewing musk and betel, and drinking wine ; and quails fight, and partridges cry, and cranes stalk about the court, and peacocks dance on the grass and wave their jewelled tails like fans, and in the midst of them, like the mistress of Indra's garden, is Vasantasena !

CHARADUTTA

Whether you speak on your own knowledge or on hearsay, I do not see how all this concerns me, or the least of your twelve good reasons.

MAITREYA

You have said it ; you said it is better to die than to be poor. My first reason, then, and a sufficient reason, is this, that, as there is no lotus that has not a stalk, no trader that is not a cheat, no goldsmith that is not a thief, and no village meeting without a quarrel, so there never will be a woman of that profession of love that does not love gold first.

CHARADUTTA

There at least you are wrong. The beggars at all the gates of the city have blessed her: I listen to their voices. But enough of this, I have more serious matters to tell you of.

MAITREYA

All men are fools, and all women are like fortune, that is as sliding and slippery as a serpent. O, the folly of men, that will not know that a woman laughs money and cries money, and is altogether money, and that she squeezes a man like colour from a bag till he is drained dry, and then casts him out into any corner of the field.

CHARADUTTA

You think evil of women, because, it may be, you have known evil women. Such there are, and I pity them, because, having no souls for the life to come, they have not made for themselves delicate shadows of souls for the adornment of this present life. But you are right: I am too poor to be in any danger from this fair lady, not because she would come to me for gold, but because I should desire to cover her wrists and her ankles with fine gold. If I have heard rightly of her, she would give gold rather than take it.

MAITREYA

Heaven send her to your house with only a few pounds weight of the gold and jewels she carries upon her person.

CHARADUTTA

Maitreya, this is unseemly. I tell you I have other matters to talk of, dangers, or perhaps hopes, that are now in men's minds. What do you think of the chances of Aryaka the cowherd against those of Pulaka the king ?

MAITREYA

Aryaka has a prophet behind him, Pulaka only a throne. Yet a throne is stable, until many men overturn it.

CHARADUTTA

Many men are pledged to overturn the throne of Pulaka.

MAITREYA

Here at least is one shoulder for the occasion.

CHARADUTTA

Is that meant for a word or a deed ?

MAITREYA

Try me.

CHARADUTTA

I will try you. Will you share a secret with me ?

MAITREYA

Give me half then.

CHARADUTTA

You must bear half of the burden. I am in the counsels of Aryaka.

MAITREYA

I knew it. Why did you not trust me sooner?

CHARADUTTA

You know, then, that he is to escape from prison?

MAITREYA

Is it so? When?

CHARADUTTA

To-morrow or the day after. His followers await him outside the gates.

MAITREYA

To escape from prison is hard enough, but not so hard as to get through the city gates.

CHARADUTTA

Have I not free passage at every gate? Is my carriage ever detained or examined?

MAITREYA

Ah! you will send him in your carriage.

CHARADUTTA

I will take him in my carriage, and you will be with me. They will say at the gate : " That is Charadutta in his carriage with his friend Maitreya." No one will stop us. Once outside the gate he is among friends. Then we will return quietly. Will you come with me ?

MAITREYA

I would come with you to the cross-roads by the southern cemetery, beyond which no man goes with his head on his shoulders.

CHARADUTTA

We risk no less.

MAITREYA

Go on.

CHARADUTTA

A messenger brings me word when he is out of prison, and where he is, there my coachman finds himself by precise accident, not knowing why. Promise me your help and your silence.

MAITREYA

My help and my silence are yours. Why, who knows, if the cowherd becomes king, Maitreya may creep into comfort at a cow's tail.

CHARADUTTA

Aryaka will not fail. He will bring us freedom, and is not freedom more than all things ?

MAITREYA

Can you say that ?

CHARADUTTA

Why not ?

MAITREYA

More than women and music ? Why, your whole soul was filled with Vasantasena a minute ago, and will be filled with her again next minute.

CHARADUTTA

Do you think so ? I do not think any woman will ever come between me and my duty.

MAITREYA

If Aryaka has many such followers he will not fail. Pulaka has none. His friends leave Pulaka daily, and not so much for love of one or the other as for hatred of the king's brother-in-law, Prince Samsthanaka.

CHARADUTTA

If there is any man in the kingdom I would be least willing to welcome in my house, that is the man.

MAITREYA

Do you take him to be your enemy?

CHARADUTTA

I take him to be every honest man's enemy, and I could hope he has made no exception of me.

MAITREYA

They say he is madly in love with Vasantasena, and that she will not suffer the odour of his cloak within three leagues of her nostrils.

CHARADUTTA

He is only not a terror to honest men, because he is afraid of the scabbard of his own sword; but women fear him because he is not ashamed that they should be afraid. Listen! What was that? A cry?

MAITREYA. It was nothing; the high road at this time of the evening is a-swarm with all sorts of loose persons, courtiers, and cut-throats. Let them all go their own way to destruction.

CHARADUTTA

That is an evil wish, and may bring us misfortune. Listen! Someone is knocking at the door.

[*Sounds of hubbub are heard from the street, cries and scuffling. Then a knocking.* CHARADUTTA *and* MAITREYA *have both risen.* MAITREYA *opens the door and looks out.*

MAITREYA

Vardhamana is opening the door. Someone wants to come in. He tries to shut the door. It is pushed open. It is a woman, I can hear the sound of her anklets. She is richly dressed and covered with jewels.

CHARADUTTA

A woman, richly dressed, why does she seek to enter my house ?

MAITREYA

I will call to her not to come in. She is running through the court.

*[He starts and falls back from the door as a woman comes hurriedly forward and stands on the threshold, veiled, and with her head bowed in an attitude of humility.*

VASANTASENA

Master, forgive me !

*[A long pause.*

CHARADUTTA *[in a stifled voice]*

Vasantasena !

MAITREYA *[to someone without]*

No, no, not you, too !

*[A puffing and blowing is heard, and an immense woman, leaning on a stick, thrusts herself in, past* MAITREYA *and* VASANTASENA.

RAMBHA

Vasantasena, indeed! Don't pretend that you don't know who it is. Who else should it be? Oh! my poor breath, who else would spend the last breath of her poor old mother with running about the streets at night, and without her attendants, and at the time of the evening when all the bad, wicked people are abroad on the king's highway! But indeed his Royal Highness, if the girl could but see with the eyes of wisdom, her mother's eyes, I would say. . . .

MAITREYA [*at the door*]

They are all coming into the garden. It is the prince. I will go out and tell him what I think of him.

[*He snatches up a stick and goes out. Noise of voices is heard.*

CHARADUTTA [*coming forward*]

Honoured guests, my house is yours. If it is too humble for your entertainment, it is at least a safe shelter against those who have dared to molest you. Deign to enter and be seated.

RAMBHA

You would come, Vasantasena; now don't you go in and sit down? I told you the prince meant no harm; it was only his way of showing his uncontrollable passion, and the uncontrollable passion of a great prince is a great honour. Thank you, sir, I will sit down with pleasure.

[*She sits down heavily and painfully.* VASANTASENA *moves forward and stands beside her*]

And I suppose you have frightened away the prince for good and all.

MAITREYA [*outside the door*]

Not a step further, or you measure your sword against my stick.

SAMSTHANAKA [*without*]

Who has got my sword? No, don't take it out of its sheath.

MAITREYA [*backing to the door*]

Not a step further.

CHARADUTTA [*calls*]

Maitreya, give way! (*He goes forward.*) My lord, all guests are welcome to my house, who enter it in peace.

SAMSTHANAKA [*without*]

Stand back, all of you; not a step further. I go alone. (*He appears, extravagantly and awkwardly over-dressed, carrying his heavy sword. He disregards* CHARADUTTA, *and holds out his hands towards* VASANTASENA.) Vasantasena!

RAMBHA

His Royal Highness is speaking to you.

SAMSTHANAKA

Why have you fled away from me, Vasantasena, like the deer from the hunter? But it is I that am hunted; all the dogs of the god of love are upon me. Why have you fled from

me? You and sleep have fled from me together, and I dream by day, and if I see you, you flee away from me like a dream when one awakens.

RAMBHA

The prince is speaking to you, Vasantasena.

SAMSTHANAKA

Why have you fled from me like a peacock when her tail is in full feather in summer, and like a crane when she hears the thunder in the clouds, and like a jackal hunted by dogs? Your feet that were made for dancing have fled swiftly, like a snake from the king of the birds. I could outstrip the wind in its course, and shall I not overtake so delicate a flyer? Your ear-rings tinkled at your ears like a lute played swiftly by a master. But I have come upon you, and no man can take you out of my power.

CHARADUTTA

My lord!

SAMSTHANAKA

The king, Vasantasena, is my brother-in-law; the king will do anything that I ask of him; he will give me any of his treasures; you have only to ask of me, and I will give you everything you want.

RAMBHA

Do you hear that, Vasantasena? Listen to what he is saying, my daughter.

SAMSTHANAKA

How is it that I, who am the king's brother-in-law, have to beg and not to command? How have you turned your eyes from my face, which is as the sun upon the face of the master of this house, which is as the moon in her last quarter? And you, sir, if you will deliver this woman into my hands, without dispute, her delivery shall be rewarded with my most particular regard; but if you will not, then count upon my eternal and exterminating enmity.

[VASANTASENA *turns and looks at* CHARADUTTA.

CHARADUTTA

My lord, you have honoured me with your presence in my humble abode; be pleased to remove your shadow from my door. It is too protracted an honour.

SAMSTHANAKA [*retreating*]

The dog is disloyal. He shall suffer for it. Sir, no haste. (*He retreats.*)

[MAITREYA *comes towards him from the side with a threatening aspect*]

Vasantasena, what have you done to me? You have bewitched me.

RAMBHA [*hobbling after him*]

Stop, stop, kind sir. She is not in her proper mind. If you will only listen to me, my lord!

MAITREYA [*to* SAMSTHANAKA]

Have you any more speeches to make?

SAMSTHANAKA [*looking at him with contempt*]

I do not see you. Wait, Vasantasena!

[*He goes out, followed by* RAMBHA, *who plucks at his sleeve, and by* MAITREYA, *who stops outside the door.*

VASANTASENA [*dropping on her knees before* CHARADUTTA]

You have saved more than my life.

CHARADUTTA

I have but opened my door. It is you who have come in, and you are Vasantasena, you have brought the spring, like an army with banners.

VASANTASENA

I am unworthy to come under your roof.

CHARADUTTA

It is because I made an offering this morning to my household gods that they have brought you under it.

VASANTASENA

I have found safety, but to remain longer would be too dangerous for me.

CHARADUTTA

My poverty is my safeguard.

VASANTASENA

Alas, sir ! I would that it sheltered you not.

MAITREYA [*at the door*]

Yes, if you have done whispering to your fine prince, and can leave his company for ours, come in, madam.

[*They both come in, and* RAMBHA *stands talking to* MAITREYA, *and then hobbles back to* VASANTASENA.

RAMBHA

Why cannot all folks live peaceably with one another ? I, who am no longer in my first youth and full maturity of beauty, have in my time known many men, and some of them princes ; but never have two men come to blows in my name ! Conciliate them, I say to my daughter, conciliate them all : one never knows who may be king to-morrow. Vasantasena, the good excellent prince has gone away in a great rage, and I know not what he would have done if I had not followed and spoken peaceably to him. Oh ! we are all undone, and it is this kind gentleman who took us in (the seven mouths of hell chew him up !) that will be the means of bringing trouble upon us.

CHARADUTTA

It is by such princes that kingdoms fall. I am glad to know myself his enemy. But no harm shall come on you. In my house you are safe, and I will not leave you till you are safe in your own house.

RAMBHA

Listen, my daughter, how kind the gentleman is. I think, sir, you have seen better days ?

VASANTASENA

Mother !

CHARADUTTA

A better night I have never seen. But I forget my duties. I have but poor entertainment to offer you, but, such as I have—Radanika !

[MAID *comes from the inner room, bringing glasses, which she offers, and then stands in a corner of the room.*

VASANTASENA

Sir, we were on our way homeward, and have stayed too long already.

CHARADUTTA

I pray you, stay.

VASANTASENA

Sir, I pray you, let us go.

MAITREYA

Very pretty on both sides ; and whilst you two stand there, nodding your heads to one another like a field of long grass, permit me to bend mine, in the manner of a young camel with stiff knees, and request you will be pleased to hold yourselves upright again.

RAMBHA

A wise fellow. But we must indeed be going.

VASANTASENA

If your friend here would vouchsafe us the defence of his company on our way home.

CHARADUTTA

Maitreya, attend the ladies.

MAITREYA

You will do better to go with them yourself, sir, for I truly fear that these court libertines would have no more respect for my person than dogs have for a meat-offering in the streets.

CHARADUTTA

I will attend them, but meanwhile see that torches are prepared.

MAITREYA

Ho, Vardhamana! (*He comes in.*) Light the torches.

SERVANT

How are they to be lighted without oil?

MAITREYA [*to* CHARADUTTA *aside*]

To say the truth, sir, our torches are like harlots: they shine not in poor men's houses.

CHARADUTTA

Silence! I will go and see to them myself. I crave leave of absence, that I may prepare for your safe conveying. Come with me, Maitreya.

[*They go out into the court.* RAMBHA *gets up and prowls about, looking at everything.*

RAMBHA

Not enough here, my daughter, to look decent on the walls of a kitchen-wench. Poor man, and *this* is what you would come to!

VASANTASENA

Poor man!

[*From behind the curtain over a door is heard the voice of a child wailing out,* "I don't want it," *and throwing something on the ground.*

RAMBHA

A child! (*To the* MAID.) Has your master children?

MAIDSERVANT

One son, madam.

VASANTASENA

Then he is not poor. Oh, let me see him.

[*The child pushes aside the curtain, and comes in crying and dragging a clay toy-cart by the wheel.* MAID *runs up to him.*

MAIDSERVANT

Run away, Rohasena, and play with your cart.

ROHASENA

I don't want *this* cart ; it's only clay ; I want the gold one.

VASANTASENA

Poor little fellow !

MAIDSERVANT

And where are we to get the gold, my little man ? Wait till your father is rich again ; then he will buy you a gold one.

ROHASENA

I want a gold one *now*.

VASANTASENA

Come here and kiss me, my child. (*She takes him in her arms and kisses him.*) How like his father he is !

MAIDSERVANT

He is not only like him in face ; he is just the same in disposition. He is the sweetest child in the world. His father worships him.

VASANTASENA

Why is he crying ? Don't cry, little man. What are you crying for ?

ROHASENA

For my cart. I don't want *this* cart.

VASANTASENA

What does he mean ?

MAIDSERVANT

Our neighbour's child had a cart of gold, and the child here used to play with it. Now the other has taken it away, and he wants it back. I made him this one of clay, but he keeps saying : " I want the gold one ! "

VASANTASENA

Is it not terrible that a child should want anything and not have it ? I thought that children had everything that they wanted. And here is a little child who suffers already because another is more fortunate than he is. The fates of men are like water-drops trembling on the leaves of a lotus. But for a child ! I did not know there was so much cruelty in the world. Child, child, don't cry, and you shall have a gold cart.

ROHASENA

Radanika, who is this lady ? Is she my new mother ?

[VASANTASENA *looks on the ground in silence.*

MAIDSERVANT

No, no, this isn't your new mother.

ROHASENA

I thought she might be, Radanika; but then how could it be my mother when she wears such fine things?

CHARADUTTA [*outside*]

Radanika! you must come here.

[MAIDSERVANT *goes hurriedly into the court.*

VASANTASENA

O, my child, you do not know what pitiful things you are saying. (*Half-laughing and half-crying, takes off her jewels one by one, and holds them up to the child, and then drops them into the toy-cart.*) Here is a little gold chain for you, and I will take this long chain off my neck.

RAMBHA

Vasantasena!

VASANTASENA

Do you see this bracelet? A King of the West gave that to me.

RAMBHA

Vasantasena! the king's bracelet!

VASANTASENA

But I don't care for it: I give it to you. And here is another, that was given me by somebody I loved very much; but I don't care for it any longer. You shall have that too.

RAMBHA

Vasantasena! the bracelet of Rama! Are you beside yourself!

VASANTASENA

Silence, mother! And here is a diamond that came from deep under the earth in Africa, and this pearl was brought up by a diver from a bottomless sea. You shall have them both.

RAMBHA

All our treasures! O, Vasantasena!

VASANTASENA

They are all yours, because you are a child, and Charadutta's, and because you are unhappy. Now I am really your mother.

ROHASENA

Why are you crying? I won't take them, because you are crying.

VASANTASENA

Now, I am not crying any more. Look, now your cart is more beautiful than any gold cart; it is more beautiful than any cart in the world. Go and play now, child.

[ROHASENA *and* RADANIKA *go into the inner room.*

RAMBHA

Vasantasena, you are foolish and wicked. You have given away treasures as if they were trinkets. And I know why you have done it.

VASANTASENA [*with sudden severity*]

Mother, you will know nothing. Not a word of this. Hark, they are coming back. I will cover myself with this cloak, it is Charadutta's, it is like a garden of jasmine.

[CHARADUTTA *and* MAITREYA *enter with torches.*

CHARADUTTA

We have found but little oil for the torches, but the moon is at the full, and all the stars wait upon Vasantasena.

[VASANTASENA, *followed by her mother, moves towards the door.* CHARADUTTA *and* MAITREYA *stand with their torches lifted.*

CURTAIN

## ACT II

*A room in* VASANTASENA'S *house, luxuriantly furnished, with an inner door, covered with curtains, leading into the house. A large door on the left leads from the street, through inner courts. Near this door are tables, at one of which three men are playing dice with cowries.*

GAMBLER

No more dice for me! How many times am I to be ruined by this evil fate that shakes out always odd for even and even for odd. A curse on all cowries!

[*Throws down the dice.*

SECOND GAMBLER

It is always the next throw that brings luck.

FIRST GAMBLER

So you say when you have been winning. How am I to pay you if I let you win any more?

SECOND GAMBLER

A gambler asks that! As if this man did not know every cunning short cut to fortune! How many parts have you played already, O player at all games, under all disguises?

First Gambler

No more dice for me!

Second Gambler

Dice and women never played any man false, unless the man first played false with dice and women.

First Gambler

Where is the man who has never played false with either?

Second Gambler

I know such a man, and he has lost deeper than any gamester.

First Gambler

Who is the man?

Second Gambler

Charadutta.

Third Gambler

Charadutta does not need to suffer from dice or women; the gods are against him, and against the gods there is no remedy.

First Gambler

What has befallen him?

SECOND GAMBLER

He was the richest man in the city, and now he is penniless and without more than a single friend, who sticks to him like a poor man's dog; he was married, and his wife is dead; he was a good servant to the king, and his place has been taken from him. What dice have ever thrown such a fortune?

THIRD GAMBLER

If I hear rightly, it is his own bounty that has ruined him, and no fault of his. He was eaten up by hungry friends.

SECOND GAMBLER

Is it easier to bear chastisement because one is innocent? Now, if it had been our friend here?

FIRST GAMBLER

I make no pretences, and the gods have little enough need to concern themselves with my doings. What need have they, when I am here, and with you, and with these accursed cowries? And are any of us here except by the aid and for the profit of the old mercenary mother of Vasantasena, the mountainous Rambha?

SECOND GAMBLER

Say nothing against the mother of Vasantasena. But for her, as you say, should we be here? Vasantasena is adorable to all, and it is the mother who chooses and approves of the adorers.

First Gambler

Is there anything more foolish in the world than to spend money on Vasantasena? She has never cared for a man in her life, and there is not a man who has seen her dance who would not give his life for her.

Third Gambler [*to* Second Gambler]

Except your impeccable Charadutta.

First Gambler

I tell you if Vasantasena did but lift the corner of her veil before him, your sober Charadutta, your model of all the virtues (he is wise, he won't dice with you), Charadutta, I say, would be kissing her feet before the veil was safely back over her eyes.

Second Gambler

Charadutta would die rather than enter this house, or look into the eyes under that veil.

First Gambler

What will you wager?

Second Gambler

Ten suvarnas. Pick up the cowries that you threw on the ground.

[Gambler *picks up the cowries. At this moment* Vasantasena's Maid *looks anxiously through the curtain.*

SECOND GAMBLER

Wait. Here is Mandanika! Perhaps Vasantasena is coming at last. Where is your mistress?

MAID [*coming in*]

That is what I want to know. She is with her mother, and where she has led her mother no one can know. Now it's here, now it's there, always as the whim of the moment takes her. I had to put all her best clothes and her best jewels on her! The gods send her back safe, these late thieving evenings!

FIRST GAMBLER

Has Prince Samsthanaka been here lately?

MAID

Lately? Not a day, not an hour passes but he, or his messengers, or his body-servants with flowers, or his house-servants with heavy baskets, are here waiting for answers that never come.

FIRST GAMBLER

The prince is not used to wait for an answer.

MAID

Here he must learn it then, for Vasantasena will have none of him, though he is next to the king, and a man of great valour and learning.

SECOND GAMBLER

Valour and learning, Mandanika? Who has told you this of him?

MAID

He told me himself. But listen, I hear footsteps. Someone is coming. Is it Vasantasena?

[*She rushes to the door, which opens, and* RAMBHA *comes in, puffing and blowing.*

Where . . .?

RAMBHA

Here, of course. Take her to her room and help her to change her dress.

[VASANTASENA, *veiled and closely wrapped in* CHARADUTTA'S *cloak, passes across the stage, and goes in at an inner door, followed by* MANDANIKA.

Come, Charadutta, you must come in: no denial. Come.

[CHARADUTTA *enters slowly, and as if unwillingly, followed by* MAITREYA, *who gazes curiously around.*

SECOND GAMBLER

Charadutta!

FIRST GAMBLER

What was the wager? In any case, I have won it.

SECOND GAMBLER

This passes belief, and must be confirmed by the dice before I shall believe it.

RAMBHA

If you will be so good as to sit down. These gentlemen care only for dice and conversation, and will not disturb us.

CHARADUTTA

We have brought you home in safety : suffer us to retire.

MAITREYA [*whispering*]

Already ?

RAMBHA

My daughter will not allow it. You are to sit down, and she will be with you in a moment. Ho, Pallava, Madhavika !

[*Women come in and offer refreshments to* CHARADUTTA *and* MAITREYA.

MAITREYA [*to* CHARADUTTA]

Is it a house or a palace ? Have you ever seen so many useless and beautiful things in a single room ?

FIRST GAMBLER

Though Charadutta is here, he would sooner be anywhere else by the look in his eyes, and the uneasiness of his fingers.

MAITREYA

Did I not tell you? Did I tell you half? I should take you away from here at once, but the fact is I am far too well off myself to think of getting up from these heavenly cushions and setting down this nectar of Sudra.

RAMBHA [*to* CHARADUTTA]

Your friend does more justice to our humble hospitality than you do.

CHARADUTTA

My eyes are feasted with colour; what other sense need feast?

MAITREYA

If there should only be music in addition to all these luxuries of the senses, my poor friend is lost for ever.

RAMBHA

Ah, dear sir, if you knew the cost of the least small thing in the place. Every one of them bought with the best money. There remains little enough to one who, like myself, has to keep the house, as they say, going. And Vasantasena, who is so free with her costliest jewels, always giving them away, giving away more than she gets, and to those who can have no pretence to deserve them.

CHARADUTTA

I once knew what pleasure it was to give gifts. Now I can only envy her.

RAMBHA

For that you have no good reason. She gives them away, throws them away, as if jewels were meant for the poor.

CHARADUTTA

The poor have rarely the chance of knowing that such things exist. To see them, worn by Vasantasena, is riches enough to a poor man.

RAMBHA

How can you talk of jewels?

FIRST GAMBLER

Do you see how blackly the old witch looks into his eyes, mumbling words that she doesn't say to him? Charadutta is no welcome guest here.

SECOND GAMBLER

Wait till Vasantasena returns. Who knows? I have won from you.

FIRST GAMBLER

I was not looking. Show me the dice.

CHARADUTTA

I must bid farewell to Vasantasena.

RAMBHA

Tell Vasantasena that Charadutta is going.

[*One of the women goes into the inner room.*

MAITREYA [*rising slowly*]

Charadutta, I am sure it would be better to go before she comes back. We have time to go before she comes back.

FIRST GAMBLER

Show me the dice, I say.

SECOND GAMBLER

Here are the numbers.

FIRST GAMBLER

Give me the dice into my hand!

CHARADUTTA [*with disgust, rising*]

What is this angry talk?

FIRST GAMBLER.

You cheated.

SECOND GAMBLER

What do you mean?

FIRST GAMBLER

Give me the dice. Your dice were loaded.

THIRD GAMBLER

It is true. He has been cheating.

SECOND GAMBLER

You insult me.

First Gambler

Here are proofs. Give me back all that you have won from me, or I will call the officer of justice, and you shall be banished from the kingdom.

Second Gambler

Let me go.

First Gambler

Give me back my money.

Third Gambler

Give him back the ten suvarnas.

[*In the midst of the hubbub the curtains over the inner room are thrust back, and* Vasantasena, *dressed as a dancer, in gorgeous clothes, is seen standing, motionless, looking with disdain at the gamblers, the face of the* Maid *visible over her shoulder. She stands there without a word, until suddenly the gamblers catch sight of her, and become silent. She comes slowly into the room, with scornful eyes.*

Vasantasena

Gentlemen, this is my house, and disputes are settled in the street.

[*They go out confusedly, quarrelling.* Vasantasena *turns apologetically to* Charadutta, *and then says bitterly to her mother*:

These were your friends! (*To* Charadutta.) My lord, may this be forgotten?

CHARADUTTA

It is forgotten already. But I must not wait here another moment.

VASANTASENA

Then you do not forget.

CHARADUTTA

You must not think that. A duty calls me; I must go back.

VASANTASENA

You are my guest. I have only music and dancing to welcome you; but do you not love music? Nay, be seated.

[*They sit down.*

CHARADUTTA

More than anything in the world.

VASANTASENA

I love music so much that my body follows it wherever it goes. When I dance, it is to say more clearly, and in my own voice, what music says. We will have music, and I will dance for you. Call in the musicians.

[MAID *goes into the inner part of the house and returns presently with musicians.*

CHARADUTTA

I have often dreamed of a dance which should be more articulate, more human, than music: dance that dance to me, Vasantasena, for I have never seen it.

RAMBHA

He must never see it.

MAITREYA

Now she will dance the heart out of his body.

VASANTASENA

Have you never thought how we, whose business is love, have learned to speak without speech, to sing without words, to express every emotion by a gesture? They teach us to dance, and we dance as they teach us; but there is something which no master can ever teach us.

CHARADUTTA

Have you learned that lesson which no master can teach you?

VASANTASENA

I am beginning to learn it. I will show you how it begins. But I will sing first, because words follow music the first part of the way. [*Sings*]:

How fair and how pleasant art thou,
O love, for delights!
As the apple upon the bough
Thy sweetness invites.
A fountain of gardens, a well
Of water alone;
A pomegranate fruit and the smell
Of Lebanon.

Awake, O north wind, and blow
On my garden, O south!
What spices are these that outflow
From the kiss of her mouth?
O vineyard, she is thy vine:
What are aloes and myrrh?
Her love is much better than wine:
What is like unto her?

CHARADUTTA

A lover wrote it, and when you sing it, it makes every man a lover.

VASANTASENA

Shall I sing you or say you out of love then, and in a song of the same singer? But this is better for speaking than for singing.

[*She repeats a song against love.*]

There is a thing in the world that has been since the world began:
The hatred of man for woman, the hatred of woman for man,
When shall this thing be ended? When love ends, hatred ends,
For love is a chain between foes, and love is a sword between friends.
Shall there never be love without hatred? Not since the world began,
Until man teach honour to woman, and woman teach pity to man.

O that a man might live his life for a little tide
Without this rage in his heart, and without this foe at his side!
He could eat and sleep and be merry and forget, he could live well enough,
Were it not for this thing that remembers and hates, and that hurts and is love.
But peace has not been in the world since love and the world began,
For the man remembers the woman, and the woman remembers the man.

CHARADUTTA

That was written by a lover who knew all that goes to make up love, and you say it as if you knew that hate is the salt and savour of love.

VASANTASENA

Indeed I know no such thing; but speak what I have learned. If I give over words I shall have to speak truth, whether I will or not, for the body cannot lie.

RAMBHA [*getting up and coming over to her*]

Vasantasena, you are not to dance.

VASANTASENA

Mother, I am going to dance.

RAMBHA

It kills you when you dance, and there are no princes here ; no one will give you jewels and gold and slaves ; you dance with too much of your soul and body.

VASANTASENA

I am going to dance.

[RAMBHA *hobbles grumblingly back to her seat.*

MAITREYA

Now she is going to capture him ; if she dies for it she will capture him. Will not anything keep her from dancing ?

CHARADUTTA

Dance, Vasantasena !

[*There is music ; women come forward strewing roses, and slowly* VASANTASENA *rises, and steps forward. She dances a dance of slow and various movements, with pantomime ; at the climax she crouches and utters a wordless song, hoarse and harsh, pathetic and terrible, after which she rises, takes a step, and staggers, as if about to fall. Meanwhile,* CHARADUTTA, *towards whom her whole dance is directed, follows the motions in a low voice, like an undertone or accompaniment, interpreting them to himself, and falling gradually into an ecstasy, always restrained, and as if his soul were a mirror to her movements. At the last movement, when she has come almost close to him, he catches her in his arms as she is about to fall.*

CHARADUTTA

What is she dancing? It is the dawn, it is herself, it is spring, it is an awakening. It is the soul awakening to love. And love comes as a little child, and she smiles to it, unafraid. And her eyes grow graver, and her mouth has tasted love like a rose-leaf, and the scent of roses is in her nostrils. Now she breathes more heavily, a delicious pain is in her eyes, and her hands reach after the hands of love. Her heart is full of a strange sorrow, which is sweeter than honey; knowledge comes into her eyes like an anguish and like a solace; her mouth thirsts and laughs; and the mouth of love is upon her mouth. Now she knows what joy is, and how near joy is to sorrow, and a langour of vehement peace envelops her. She is a garden of roses, she is the mystical rose of a garden of roses; the rose is full of joy in the wind that is in the garden of spices. O rose, rose, the joy of love is forever! But the wind is turning chill and she shivers, the rose trembles because the wind envelops her; and the sun has gone down, and it is evening, and the night begins to creep about her. She suffers cold, darkness and shame; she that was a flower has become a weed: shall not the weed be plucked up and cast out in the burning?

[*Here he is silent, while* VASANTASENA *sings her wordless song*]

O fate, the sickle of time, cut not down this weed that was a rose. Sharp death is upon her, she bows her head: is it too late? Is it too late for love?

[*He rushes forward and catches her in his arms as she falls*]

O Vasantasena, was it all truth? Speak, answer me, Vasantasena!

[*She lies with closed eyes, and he lays her back on the cushions.* RAMBHA, MANDANIKA, *and the women hurry up and press around her, holding salts and scents to her.*

RAMBHA

I knew it, I knew it. She is bewitched and will put an end to her own life in mere joy and intoxication. I beg you, sir, to stand back: do you wish literally to kill her?

MAITREYA

The tricks of a woman are numberless as the hairs of her head; what man shall count them?

CHARADUTTA

Awaken, Vasantasena.

[VASANTASENA *looks up, and puts her hands silently on his.*

RAMBHA [*to the singers and musicians*]

You can all go!

[*They go out.*]

And now, my child, now that you have had your way, and danced all the breath out of your body, perhaps you will lie quiet a little.

[*A servant enters.*]

Who called you?

SERVANT
Madam.

RAMBHA
Say and go.

SERVANT
The royal Prince Samsthanaka craves leave to enter.

VASANTASENA [*starting up*]
Never!

CHARADUTTA [*drawing his sword*]
Vasantasena, give me leave!

VASANTASENA [*catching hold of him*]
No, no, you must stay here till he has gone. Mother, go to the prince and tell him that I will not see him, tell him that I will never see him, tell him whatever will make a man most hate a woman, that he may hate me and be gone out of my way for ever.

RAMBHA
I will go to him, my daughter, and he shall not come in to you, but I shall not say to him what you have said to me, or the worse things that you have not said to me. Come, Mandanika, lend me your arm: I cannot go quickly enough to where the prince is waiting.

[*She hobbles out through the door on the left, leaning on the* MAID. MAITREYA *goes ostentatiously to the other end of the room, and turns his back with a shrug upon* CHARADUTTA *and* VASANTASENA.

CHARADUTTA

Why do you keep me back, when with one stroke of my sword I would have rid you of this enemy, and the hand of a tyrant worse than the tyrant on the throne?

VASANTASENA

Would you have done this for me?

CHARADUTTA

Let me go and I will do it.

VASANTASENA

Then I will hold you, for now I am more careful of your life than of my own.

CHARADUTTA

What is my life worth, now that I am a beggar? But your life has the power and should have the immortality of the stars.

VASANTASENA

Promise me that you will be careful of your life as of a thing whose loss I must needs die of. Do not seek Samsthanaka! Let all such vermin be: he is a snake whose poison is death, and he seeks your life.

CHARADUTTA

I set my heel on no snake that does not lift up his head against me.

VASANTASENA

No more of him : my mother will be coming back, and this moment will be over.

CHARADUTTA

Why should this moment ever be over? If you wish it, why did you look at me in the garden of the temple of Kamsdeva?

VASANTASENA

I did not look at you. Some god looked at me through your eyes, and my being fainted, as Sanjna when her lord the sun looked at her.

CHARADUTTA

You looked at me, and I began to remember.

VASANTASENA

And I to forget.

CHARADUTTA

What would you forget?

VASANTASENA

Everything. Every pleasure, I have no happiness to forget.

CHARADUTTA

You have made happiness for others.

VASANTASENA

Has one of them thanked me?

CHARADUTTA

Many have loved you.

VASANTASENA

Would one of them have thanked me for love? Of all who have come to me with gifts and tears, saying "Love me or I die," is there one who would have rejoiced if I had given him all myself, all my love? That is a gift much too costly for any man to accept.

CHARADUTTA

Vasantasena, give me that gift.

VASANTASENA

No, I will be kinder to you. For love of you I must not let you love me.

CHARADUTTA

You have called me; first your eyes spoke to me, and I came, not knowing why I came; now you have danced to me, and your body has spoken, and I know all your heart. You have thrown over me a net that you cannot loosen.

VASANTASENA

O Charadutta, is this truth, or is it nothing but music?

CHARADUTTA

The music is over, the dance has spoken; it is my heart that you hear now. Will you tell me that you do not love me?

VASANTASENA

I will not tell you. When I would say the name of another, why does the name of Charadutta come to my lips? When I speak to my maid, and know not what I have told her, and she smiles, why is it that I am so absent? Why is it that I am as an altar on which a perpetual fire has been lighted?

CHARADUTTA

I am a beggar, and have no gifts to bring. What will you ask of me that I may do for you?

VASANTASENA

Will you put out the perpetual fire? Many waters cannot put it out. Will you give me forgetfulness? Many bowls of sleep cannot drink down memory. Will you bring back the scent into dead roses, and bring back the honey to the honeycomb, and the grapes to the vineyard where they have been plucked and trodden in the wine-press, and the feet of men are red with them, and their eyes drunken? I have been the rose of the garden, and the honey in the honeycomb, and the grapes in the vineyard.

CHARADUTTA

I am a beggar, but I can give you all this. Love is like light, and light washes the earth.

VASANTASENA

I thirst, but have I not drunk wine, and is there more wine in the world that shall slake this thirst in me? Oh, stranger, if I could be the friend of any man, if I could love and not destroy, if I could humble myself, if I could believe and forget, and if all that I have been could be forgotten, then would Vasantasena be the beggar at the feet of Charadutta.

CHARADUTTA [*kneeling*]

The beggar at her feet!

VASANTASENA

Rise, Charadutta!

[*The* MAID *comes in hurriedly and whispers in her ear.* CHARADUTTA *rises.* MAITREYA *comes forward and touches him.*

MAITREYA

I have been shutting my ears so long that I am only now able to realise that we are to go. I will accompany you, Charadutta.

CHARADUTTA [*vaguely*]

Are we going?

VASANTASENA

Go now. Alas! you must go. But to-morrow, meet me to-morrow at noon in the old flower garden. I do not know if I can live so long.

CHARADUTTA

Death shall not delay me.

MAITREYA

Remember!

CHARADUTTA

What?

MAITREYA

Aryaka!

CHARADUTTA [*to* VASANTASENA]

If a thing stronger than death delays me, and I do not come, believe me, wait for me. I will surely come.

VASANTASENA

I will believe you. I will wait for you.

[MAID *takes* CHARADUTTA *and* MAITREYA *to the outer door and returns hurriedly to* VASANTASENA.

MAID

Your mother has been talking smoothly to the prince all this time: she has taken him aside there (*she points to the outer court*) so that he should not meet Charadutta; but she will not be able to hold him back much longer; he grows madder and madder, and will see you if he puts us all to the sword.

VASANTASENA [*with concentrated rage*]

He shall see me. Let him come in.

[*The* MAID *goes out and returns presently, followed by* SAMSTHANAKA *and* RAMBHA, *who goes aside.*

SAMSTHANAKA

I am not angry with you, Vasantasena, though you have kept me waiting like a dog upon your threshold I have the power of the kingdom in my hands; the power of my brother-in-law, who is the king; but I wait at your door, Vasantasena, like a dog upon the threshold. Why have you kept me waiting while you practised the songs that are meant for my enchantment? I heard your more than celestial voice. You were singing a song I have never heard before.

VASANTASENA

I was singing a new song.

SAMSTHANAKA

Sing it to me, Vasantasena. I not only love singing, but I myself, though born royal, and able to command all singers of music, I also sing. My slaves prepare for me dishes fried in oil, and seasoned with assafoetida: that is your only diet for a sweet voice. Another time I will sing to you, but now sing your song to me, Vasantasena.

VASANTASENA

I will not sing my new song to you.

SAMSTHANAKA

How is that? I could command you. You are no better than a slave, a dancing woman, a singer; I could have you beaten if I liked. I could have you beaten until you sang whatever I wanted. There is nothing I could not do. But I will not even command you. I will entreat you.

VASANTASENA

It is useless.

SAMSTHANAKA

You say it is useless, and you are a woman. What is a woman when she speaks? She is a bough in the wind. What are women such as you but a creeper that grows by the roadside, and the crow and peacock perch on the same branch? Are you not free to all men, and am I not a man as well as a prince? If it is because of Charadutta that you put me aside, remember that Charadutta is a beggar, and, if a beggar stands in my light, he dies.

VASANTASENA

You have no power over Charadutta.

SAMSTHANAKA

I gave way to him in his own house, because every man is king in his own house, and I will do nothing against the law. Am I not the law? But I am here that I may tell you for the last time that I will suffer no man to come between us. What I will becomes mine.

VASANTASENA

What is it that you will here, prince?

SAMSTHANAKA

Your love.

VASANTASENA

I have given it away. Charadutta has taken it.

SAMSTHANAKA

The beggar, Charadutta? I will give you the crown jewels!

RAMBHA

My daughter!

VASANTASENA [*rising and moving slowly towards the inner door*]

To-morrow, at noon, in the old flower garden, Charadutta will give me a flower.

[*She goes in.*

SAMSTHANAKA

What shall I do to this seed of jackals, this brother to hyenas? Shall I grind his head between my teeth, as a nut is ground under a door?

RAMBHA

Nothing would be too bad for him, my kind, good prince. Let it be not less than heading and quartering. You see

it is not my daughter at all that is against your royal highness, but only the beggarman, the dried rattling bean-stalk, that has bewitched her.

SAMSTHANAKA

I saw, I saw it clearly. She could not possibly have an aversion for me; it is this Brahmin that deludes her. We must remove Charadutta.

RAMBHA

Noble prince, if you could but . . .

SAMSTHANAKA

Silence. I must consult my own mind.

RAMBHA

If you could only . . .

SAMSTHANAKA

Woman, you will not allow me to think. I shall soon have a magnificent idea. Anger is fruitful to ideas, and I have been mocked. I must have a large revenge. I will think out my revenge, and take less time to execute than to invent it.

RAMBHA [*creeping up and whispering mysteriously in his ear*]

Do you know to whom she has given all her jewels?

SAMSTHANAKA

Her jewels? To whom?

RAMBHA

To Charadutta's child.

SAMSTHANAKA

To the child ?

RAMBHA

The father will say he knows nothing of it ; but I know what I have seen.

SAMSTHANAKA

She gave her jewels to Charadutta's child ?

RAMBHA

All that she had upon her, heaped them like pebbles of the road in the child's toy cart.

SAMSTHANAKA

She gives him her jewels, and she will not take my jewels !

RAMBHA

Sir, when she comes to listen to me, by-and-by, she will take your jewels.

SAMSTHANAKA

He must be removed. Ah, I have it ! " To-morrow, at noon, in the Old Flower Garden." He is to give her a flower ! He shall never give her a flower. I will meet him

on the way. I will give him his choice of deaths. I will meet her in his place. I will show her on my sword the blood of the man who was weaker than I; she has a strong soul, and will love the stronger of two men, and the man who is alive rather than a dead man. I will take men with me, lest he should escape me. I will win Vasantasena at the sword's point. Take this. (*He gives* RAMBHA *gold.*) And say nothing.

RAMBHA

My daughter will be well and safe?

SAMSTHANAKA

Have no fear. And fear nothing if it should please her, rather than returning home, to follow me to the royal palace.

RAMBHA

You have given me only twenty pieces of gold.

SAMSTHANAKA

You shall have more gold, you shall have as much gold as you want. See that she comes to the Garden. I will see that Charadutta does not come. And now call someone who can call my carriage for me. I go on foot only before gods and Brahmins.

[*They go towards the door as the curtain falls,* RAMBHA *hobbling obsequiously before the prince.*

## ACT III

*The Old Flower Garden, with an open temple at one side. Enter* SAMSTHANAKA *and* ATTENDANT. *At intervals during the early part of the scene* SAMSTHANAKA *picks flowers, until he has gradually made a large bunch. He seems to do it unconsciously, as the thought of* VASANTASENA *recurs to him.*

SAMSTHANAKA [*walking up and down*]

Are my men ready for him; are they lying in wait on the road that he is sure to come?

ATTENDANT

Yes, my lord.

SAMSTHANAKA

When he comes they are to surround him, and, if he resists, kill him.

ATTENDANT

Yes, my lord.

SAMSTHANAKA

Perhaps I should meet him face to face; it would be more royal; draw my sword upon him; but no, that would be to treat him as my equal, and he is only a Brahmin, and I am a prince. Is Charadutta a good fighter?

ATTENDANT

It is said so, my lord.

SAMSTHANAKA

One can never judge by reports. In any case he would not stand against me if he saw me sword in hand, like a king and the avenger of kings. There is a majesty in my aspect, is there not, son of a slave?

ATTENDANT

The majesty of Indra.

SAMSTHANAKA

Need I condescend to the business? The slaying of a man is less to me than the stringing of a lute. My men shall deal with him. I will not meddle in it.

ATTENDANT

The way my lord chooses is always the way of wisdom.

SAMSTHANAKA

Does a man suffer much when he is killed with the sword? You have seen men killed in battle.

ATTENDANT

A man who is killed in battle dies gladly; he touches joy for an instant and then rests for an eternity.

SAMSTHANAKA

Why should I prepare joy or rest for Charadutta? I am too kind if I kill him with the sword. I would have him linger, and be without hope, and not be able to die. I would have him die of shame before death overtook him. Otherwise my revenge will be paltry, a mean man's revenge, not the judgment of a king. What would hurt Charadutta more than death?

ATTENDANT

His honour.

SAMSTHANAKA

Are you sure of that? Strange, that dishonour should hurt more than death. I do not understand it. Tell me why you think this strange thing of Charadutta.

ATTENDANT

He has lost everything else; honour he has not lost; if he had to choose between losing life and losing honour, what could there be to make him hesitate?

SAMSTHANAKA

How do you know these things that are above your station? You are not to think of them any more. But you seem to know Charadutta, and I will believe you. Charadutta must not die until he has lost his honour. After that he shall lose his life.

ATTENDANT

My lord can do all things.

SAMSTHANAKA

Let me take counsel with my mind. Stand further off, that I may have room to think.

[ATTENDANT *moves a few steps away.* SAMSTHANAKA *stands still with a fixed look. Pause.*

I have it. The jewels of Vasantasena!

ATTENDANT [*coming forward*]

My lord.

SAMSTHANAKA

I will accuse him of theft. He shall be brought before the court of law, he shall be convicted on evidence, he shall be condemned to death as a thief. I shall have killed more than his life.

ATTENDANT

It will be easier for my lord to have him killed by the sword.

SAMSTHANAKA

Easier? Then I will take the more difficult way. If I could have him arrested before he can come to the garden! or, if not arrested, at least detained. I will find out a way. Some god who helps princes will open a way for me; perhaps the god whose empty shrine is before me.

[*As he speaks the* FIRST GAMBLER *runs hurriedly in.*

First Gambler

In the name of all the gods, do not betray me!

[*He walks backwards into the temple and sits down on the empty pedestal. He is immediately followed by others, who rush into the garden and look around in surprise.*

Third Gambler

I saw him enter the garden; he must have taken sanctuary in the temple.

Second Gambler

He may hide in hell, but he shall not escape me till he has paid every farthing.

Third Gambler

Let me ask this lord. My lord, we are following a gambler who has cheated us of ten suvarnas; has any man passed this way?

Samsthanaka

I have seen no one but the god.

Second Gambler

He must be inside. We will wait. Then he will think we have gone away, and he will come out, and we shall have him. Let us wait here in the porch of the temple.

THIRD GAMBLER

Look, here are his footsteps. He was shaking with fear, every limb of him. I can see it by the marks of his feet, as they slipped and stumbled over the ground.

SECOND GAMBLER

The track is lost here ; there are no more footmarks.

THIRD GAMBLER

Hey, they are all reversed. He has walked backward into the temple.

SECOND GAMBLER

I thought the temple was empty ; there used to be no image in it. What is this image ?

THIRD GAMBLER

Is it of wood, do you think ?

SECOND GAMBLER

I think it is of stone.

[*They show by their side-glances that they have recognised the* GAMBLER. *They go near him and put out their hands as if to feel.*

THIRD GAMBLER

Never mind. Let us sit down and play out our game.

[*They sit down upon the pedestal, take out their cowries, scratch four compartments upon the ground and play.*

SECOND GAMBLER

Fourteen.

THIRD GAMBLER

Eleven.

SECOND GAMBLER

Fifteen.

THIRD GAMBLER

Now, if one had no money, the mere sound of the rattling of the dice would be as tantalising as the sound of a drum to a king without a kingdom.

SECOND GAMBLER

Or a cup of strong drink to a drunkard. It is my throw.

THIRD GAMBLER

No, it is mine.

FIRST GAMBLER [*jumping down*]

No, it is mine.

[*They seize him.*

SECOND GAMBLER

Now, hypocrite, villain, mocker of the gods, are you caught or not? Will you pay or no? Do you owe me ten suvarnas or no?

First Gambler

If you will take your hands off me I will answer your questions one at a time.

Second Gambler

Answer them all at once.

First Gambler

Yes, no, yes.

Second Gambler

What do you mean by yes, no, yes?

First Gambler

Let me explain to you in your ear. (*Aside.*) If I pay you half the money will you let me off the rest?

Second Gambler

Agreed.

First Gambler

Let me speak to him a moment. (*Whispers to the* Third Gambler.) I will give you security for half the debt if you cry quits for the other half.

Third Gambler

Agreed.

First Gambler [*to* Second Gambler *aloud*]

You let me off half the debt?

Second Gambler

I do.

First Gambler

And you give up half?

Third Gambler

I do.

First Gambler

Then good morning to you, gentlemen.

[*He turns as if to go.*

Second Gambler

Not so fast; where are you going?

First Gambler

Why look you, one of you has let me off one half, and the other has let me off another half. Is it not clear that I am quits for the whole? I wish you a good morning.

Second Gambler [*seizing him*]

Stop a moment. You know my name, you know that I know a thing or two; you know if I am going to be done like this. Down with the whole sum, or you come with me to prison.

First Gambler

O merciful sir!

Second Gambler

Pay and go free.

First Gambler

Where am I to get the money?

Second Gambler

Sell your father.

First Gambler

Is my father here to sell?

Second Gambler

Sell your mother.

First Gambler

Is my mother here to sell?

Second Gambler

Sell yourself.

First Gambler

Myself? If anyone would only buy me! Who'll buy? Who'll buy? Here's a gentleman who will perhaps buy me for ten suvarnas.

SAMSTHANAKA

Are you worth it?

FIRST GAMBLER

Am I not a cat in climbing, a deer in running, a snake in twisting, a hawk in darting upon its prey? I am Maya in disguising myself, and Sarawasti in the gift of tongues.

SAMSTHANAKA

I buy you. You are the man I want. Here are ten suvarnas. Loose him and let him go.

SECOND GAMBLER

The property is yours.

[*Takes the money and they both go.*

FIRST GAMBLER

I am your slave for life. What shall I do for you?

SAMSTHANAKA

Sir, I have a piece of work for you. If you do it you shall be rewarded, though seeing that I have bought you, you belong to me already. I am Prince Samsthanaka, and I can reward you like a prince.

FIRST GAMBLER

My lord, I will be a hawk for you in the air: what is there I should see? I will be a wolf in seizing: what is there I should seize?

SAMSTHANAKA

Seize Charadutta.

FIRST GAMBLER

What, the new lover of Vasantasena ?

SAMSTHANAKA

Why do you think he is the lover of Vasantasena ?

FIRST GAMBLER

It was at her house that I played dice once too often. Last night Charadutta was there.

SAMSTHANAKA [*flinging down the flowers*]

You saw him ? you ? at her house ? The thunder of all the gods blacken her and him ! That is why she would not let me in ! I have not only been insulted, I have been deceived. If she were not more beautiful than the dawn I would put her to death with my own hands. If she were not more desirable than the dawn I would bring eternal night upon her. But first I will avenge myself upon Charadutta. I have the means, if you will do my service swiftly and without fault.

FIRST GAMBLER

Tell me, and I will do it.

SAMSTHANAKA

Can you disguise yourself as an officer of justice, intercept Charadutta, who is now on his way to this garden, and

convey him secretly to my palace, where I will lodge a charge against him that he has stolen the jewels of Vasantasena?

First Gambler

I have personated a god. Can I not personate an officer of justice?

[*He alters the arrangement of his clothes, and disguises his face.*

Samsthanaka

Go at once. Take no one with you. He will follow you in the name of the law. Go at once.

[Gambler *goes out hurriedly. Turns to* Attendant]

I have no further need of you nor of my men. Return home and leave me alone here.

[Attendant *goes*]

The sun sits like an angry ape in the sky; I breathe flame, and there is no shade under the trees. O Vasantasena, you burn my heart like the sun at noonday. I wait for you, and I do not know if it is with love or hatred.

[*There is a sound of wheels. He listens*]

She is here. She is sending away her carriage. She is alone.

[*He sees the flowers, hurriedly picks them up, and then draws back, in the shadow of a tree.* Vasantasena *comes slowly forward, looking from side to side.*

VASANTASENA [*stopping and putting her hand to her eye*]

My right eye throbs : it is an evil omen.

[*She catches sight of* SAMSTHANAKA]

Ah !

SAMSTHANAKA [*speaking in tones of cold malice*]

Why do you stand with your eyes cast down to the earth, like cattle that hang their heads against the rain ? Why do you turn pale and shrink back, as if it were not I, Prince Samsthanaka, your lover, that you have come to meet ?

VASANTASENA [*faintly, looking round as if for help*]

I did not come to meet you.

SAMSTHANAKA [*coming nearer, and offering her flowers*]

Here are flowers for my little Vasantasena, my dove, my gazelle ; all the flowers of the garden wait for her ; she has come to receive the gift, not of a flower, but of all the flowers of the garden. This garden was made to be a place of delight, and these trees were planted to give shelter to the unsheltered. Come under their shadow, for the sun is a flame in the sky. You are pale, Vasantasena : take these flowers and come into the shadow of the trees.

[*He offers her the flowers, but she does not take them, and they fall to the ground between them.*

VASANTASENA

I will not come out of the sun.

SAMSTHANAKA

You have cast away my flowers, Vasantasena. Yet you came here for a flower. No one is here to give you that flower. Look around, he is not here. He is not anywhere among the trees; he is not hiding in the temple; he is not even under the ground.

VASANTASENA [*eagerly*]

What do you mean?

SAMSTHANAKA

Has Charadutta already forgotten that he was to meet you? You see he does not come. If he were here I would go away. I take the place of the absent.

VASANTASENA

What have you done to him? something stronger than death, he said: what have you done to Charadutta?

SAMSTHANAKA

You are a dancing girl, Vasantasena, you are the mart of love, you are the mine of pleasure. It is your trade to welcome alike the man whom you love and the man whom you do not love. Why, even if you do not love me, have you always spurned me? Why do you turn your eyes and your heart only on the man who is not here, on Charadutta? It is not too late, Vasantasena. And as for Charadutta, you see that he is not here.

[*He comes closer to her.*

VASANTASENA

Why is he not here? O where is Charadutta?

SAMSTHANAKA

Do not ask me, Vasantasena. He is not here, yet you run after him.

VASANTASENA

I will run after him until I find him. Let me pass, perhaps he is here, somewhere in the garden.

SAMSTHANAKA

Listen. This man is a beggar, and a beggar is an empty pool.

VASANTASENA

The pool is full to the brim whose water is unfit for drinking.

SAMSTHANAKA

Will you always scorn me? And is it always for his sake that you scorn me?

VASANTASENA

Let me go to him.

SAMSTHANAKA

He is not here. But I am here, Vasantasena.

VASANTASENA

Shall the swan's mate harbour with crows?

SAMSTHANAKA

You are a strangling creeper. You are a deadly weed. You must be rooted up out of the garden.

VASANTASENA

Let me go. I am afraid of your eyes and your hands.

SAMSTHANAKA

Do you see these hands? These ten fingers are not the petals of the lotus. What if they should take you by the hair of your head as Jatayn seized the wife of Bali?

VASANTASENA

Why do you cry upon me as if I had done you a wrong? I have done you no wrong. Let me go, let me go home.

[*She turns and tries to pass.*

SAMSTHANAKA

Do you see these hands? It is not with henna that they are red. It is not the sun that blinds me as I look upon you. What shall I do to the woman who has spurned me as jackals spurn carrion?

VASANTASENA

Let me go.

SAMSTHANAKA

The tiger does not only kill. Why should I kill you when you might live for my delight? Choose!

VASANTASENA

There is nothing to choose.

SAMSTHANAKA

Are you not in my power?

VASANTASENA

My body, not my innocence.

SAMSTHANAKA

We are alone; who shall see us?

VASANTASENA

The ten points of the compass, the eyes of the wood-gods, the moon, the sun that now burns upon us, the judge of the dead, the wind, the air, your conscience, and the earth: these are the witnesses of all things.

SAMSTHANAKA

I will cast my cloak over you and you shall not be seen.

VASANTASENA

Are you mad?

SAMSTHANAKA

I fear nothing, and I will do a great deed. Are you ready to die, Vasantasena?

VASANTASENA

No, no, I am not ready to die. I have not lived yet. Let me go.

[*In struggling with him she strikes him in the face.*

SAMSTHANAKA

A woman has struck me, a light woman. She must die.

VASANTASENA

Have pity on me, have pity! O I cannot die.

[*She falls on her knees before him.*

SAMSTHANAKA

Do jackals fly or crows run? Then how should I have pity?

[*He takes off his girdle and makes a noose of it.*

VASANTASENA

Mother, where are you? O Charadutta, I shall die and I shall not have known your love. The gods bless Charadutta!

SAMSTHANAKA [*drawing the noose about her neck*]

That name! again, daughter of a slave!

VASANTASENA [*in a half-choked voice*]
The gods bless Charadutta !

[*She falls motionless on the ground.* SAMSTHANAKA *leans over her, then looks up and around, moves away, comes back and gazes down at her, then takes off his cloak and is laying it over her when he notices the arms embroidered on it ; snatches back his cloak, looks helplessly and anxiously round, then gathers handfuls of dry leaves and covers her body. Then furtively and stealthily hurries out. There is a pause. Then a rough voice is heard singing in a kind of slow chant, like an old beggar, and* MENDICANT FRIAR *comes in. He carries a rosary in his hand, a wallet of black deerskin at his side, an ochre-red cloak over his arm ; he has a long beard.*

MENDICANT [*sings*] :

Good fellow-men, I bid you heap
Good deeds, and halter appetite ;
The drum of meditation keep
Your souls awake, lest in the night,
The thieving senses at the door
Break in and take away your store.

He who has slain the senses five,
Five brethren, and the hangman self,
Nor left poor ignorance alive,
Has conquered heaven for himself.
What profits it a shaven head ?
Show me a shaven soul instead.

Shade at last, and the hour advises me to rest. I have washed my cloak; where shall I put it to dry? I will hang it on the boughs of this tree. No, they are too high: I will lay it on the ground. No, there is too much dust. Ah! the wind has blown together a heap of dry leaves: I will put it there. There, it will soon be dry.

[*He spreads out his cloak over the body of* VASANTASENA *and sits down a little way off against a tree*]

Glory to Buddha! How beautifully everything in the world is adapted to its purpose. Here am I, a mendicant friar, begging my way about the world. I have come to this city, which is the most virtuous city in this region; in this city I come by mere good fortune to the Old Flower Garden, which is the most famous garden in the city: I find a pond to wash my cloak in, a shady tree to sit under, and I am alone, far from the enmities of men and the too pleasing wiles of women, where I can meditate on the divine perfections. I will close my eyes and repeat the sacred "Om." What was that?

[*He sits up and looks round*]

Something stirred or sighed in the leaves. Ah, it was only the crackling of the scorched leaves under the wetness of my cloak. I will compose myself to meditation; I will think neither upon my sins, which are of old, nor upon the virtues which I would acquire; but I will gaze fixedly at the leaves yonder, on which I have laid my cloak, and I will repeat—O what is this? The leaves spread outward like the wings of a bird? And there is a hand, a woman's hand,

with rich ornaments on it. What can this mean? The gods preserve me from pollution!

[*He rises and draws his cloak carefully away, disclosing* VASANTASENA, *who lies at full length. She feebly raises her hand and points to her mouth*]

She wants water: the pool is far away: what can I do? Ah, my cloak is still wet.

[*He squeezes some water out of his cloak upon her face, and fans her with it.*

VASANTASENA [*raising her head*]

Thanks, friend. Who are you?

MENDICANT

I am a mendicant friar. I was meditating in this garden of peace.

VASANTASENA

Of peace!

MENDICANT

What has befallen you, lady?

VASANTASENA

I think I have been dead.

MENDICANT

Rise, lady.

VASANTASENA

I cannot rise; give me your hand.

MENDICANT

That I may not do; take hold of this creeper and raise yourself.

[*He bends down to her a creeper on the trees: she lays hold of it and draws herself up*]

Come, I will lead you.

VASANTASENA

I cannot walk.

MENDICANT

If you will take hold of this, I will lead you, and I shall not have broken my oath, which forbids me to touch a woman.

VASANTASENA

I cannot go far.

MENDICANT

There is a convent close by; you shall rest there, and recover your strength. Come, lady, gently.

VASANTASENA

Am I really alive?

[*She walks feebly, holding the end of the creeper.*

MENDICANT

What should the just man care for life or death? His is the world to come.

[*They go out together.*

## ACT IV

*The Hall of Justice. The* JUDGE, *the* PROVOST, *and the* RECORDER *seated. People standing: at the back* SAMSTHANAKA.

CRIER

Give ear, all men, to the words of the judge!

JUDGE [*rising*]

I am here to do justice, on the just and on the unjust alike. A judge should be learned, wise, eloquent, dispassionate, impartial; he should pronounce judgment only after due enquiry and deliberation; he should be a guardian to the weak, a terror to the wicked; his heart should be without covetousness, his mind intent only on truth and equity, and his should it be to keep aloof the anger of the king.

PROVOST

Your worship has painted his own picture in delineating the features of the perfect judge.

RECORDER

You shall be taxed with favour when the moon is charged with obscurity.

JUDGE

The quality of a judge is readily the subject of censure. It is always hard to see into the hearts of others, and hard also is it to disentangle the coils of their doings. How often is truth far from the lips of men, and how often is an accusation brought against the innocent. Justice is in the hands of the gods alone; it is enough for us if we will to be just, and put our trust in the justice of the gods. [*He seats himself.*] Officer, go forth and see who comes to demand justice.

[OFFICER *goes to the other end of the court and cries:*

OFFICER

By order of his honour, the judge, I ask who is there that demands justice?

SAMSTHANAKA

I, the king's brother-in-law.

JUDGE

This is out of order. There are other cases that have to be tried first. Go to him and tell him that his case cannot be tried to-day.

OFFICER [*going down the hall*]

I am desired to inform your excellency that your case cannot be tried to-day.

SAMSTHANAKA

How, not to-day? Tell the judge that I shall go straight to the king, my brother-in-law, and that I shall have him dismissed from his office, and his office given to another. My case is to be heard to-day.

OFFICER

Stay one moment, your honour, and I will carry your message to the Court. (*He goes back to the* JUDGE.) Please your worship, his excellency is very angry, and declares if you will not try his suit to-day he will go to the king and procure your worship's dismissal.

JUDGE

It is in the fool's power. He must be heard. Call him, and let him come hither.

OFFICER

Will your excellency be pleased to come forward? Your case will be heard.

SAMSTHANAKA

O indeed! first it could not be heard; now it will be heard. Very well: the judges fear me: they will do my will. (*He goes up to the* JUDGES.) I am well pleased, gentlemen, by your decision; it is for you also to be well pleased, for your good pleasure lies in my hands.

JUDGE [*aside*]

Is this the language of a plaintiff? Be seated.

SAMSTHANAKA

Assuredly. Are not all these places mine, and shall I not be seated where I please? (*To the* PROVOST) I will sit here. No. (*To the* RECORDER) I will sit here; no, no. (*To the* JUDGE, *laying his hand on his shoulder*) I will sit here.

JUDGE

Your excellency has a complaint to bring?

SAMSTHANAKA

I have indeed.

JUDGE

Prefer it.

SAMSTHANAKA

All in good time. Do not forget that I am of noble family, that my father is the king's father-in-law, the king is my father's son-in-law, I am the brother-in-law of the king.

JUDGE

All this we know; but what have birth and rank to do with virtue? Thorns grow most plentifully on the richest soil. Declare therefore your suit.

SAMSTHANAKA

It is this; but it is no fault of mine. My noble brother-in-law, for his good pleasure, presented me, for my ease and

recreation, with the fairest of the royal gardens, the Old Flower Garden. I go there daily, to see that it is well kept and weeded and in order. To-day I go there as usual, and what do I see (how could I believe my eyes ?) but the dead body of a murdered woman !

JUDGE

Did you recognise the woman ?

SAMSTHANAKA

Alas, how could I fail to recognise her, the pride of our city, all her jewels gone from her, stolen no doubt by some miscreant who had lured her into the lonely garden ? I saw Vasantasena, strangled by his hands, not by me.

[*He breaks short.*

JUDGE

The city is ill-guarded. Gentlemen, you have heard the complaint ; let it be recorded, including the words " not by me."

RECORDER [*writing*]

It is written.

SAMSTHANAKA

What have I said ? My lords, I was going to say, not by me was the deed beheld. It is not necessary to note down these mere trifles.

JUDGE

How, then, if you did not see it done, do you know that Vasantasena was strangled, and for the sake of her jewels?

SAMSTHANAKA

I conclude so, for the neck was bare and swollen, and her dress rifled of its jewels.

PROVOST

It seems like enough.

SAMSTHANAKA [*aside*]

I breathe again.

JUDGE

First of all, let officers be sent with speed to the Old Flower Garden, and let them bring hither the body of the murdered woman.

[OFFICERS *go out. There is a stir in the court, and the* FIRST GAMBLER *comes in hurriedly and makes signs to* SAMSTHANAKA, *who leaves his place and goes aside with him.*

GAMBLER

My lord, I have failed. I have found Charadutta nowhere, though I have searched every corner of the city. I have failed to delay him from my lord's path.

SAMSTHANAKA

Fool, the god whose place you took in the temple has done better than you. A murder has been committed in the garden: remember, it was Charadutta who did it, and he did it for the jewels of Vasantasena.

[*He goes back to his place.*

PROVOST

On what further evidence does this suit depend?

JUDGE

The case is twofold, and must be investigated both in relation to facts and to assertions; the verbal investigation relates to plaintiff and respondent, that of facts depends upon the judge.

SAMSTHANAKA

My lords, I have further evidence to give, I have an accusation to make.

JUDGE

Whom do you accuse?

SAMSTHANAKA

I accuse Charadutta.

JUDGE

Prince, you are jesting. It were as easy to weigh Himalaya, to ford the ocean, or to grasp the wind, as to fix a stain on Charadutta.

SAMSTHANAKA

I have evidence.

JUDGE

Give your evidence. And meanwhile let Charadutta be summoned, not as one accused, but as one who would rather that evil tales were told of him to his face than behind his back. Say, at his perfect convenience.

[OFFICER *is going out.*

SAMSTHANAKA

I demand the mother of Vasantasena as a witness.

JUDGE

Let her be summoned, but with all courtesy.

[OFFICER *goes out and returns immediately with* RAMBHA.

OFFICER

She was waiting outside the court.

RAMBHA

My lords, my lords, where is my daughter? O my heart! I am fainting, what with the heat and the emotion. Will your worships allow me to sit down?

JUDGE

Be seated.

RAMBHA

What have I heard? What has happened to my daughter?

JUDGE

You are the mother of Vasantasena?

RAMBHA

I am.

JUDGE

Where is your daughter?

RAMBHA

That is what I ask. Where is my daughter?

JUDGE

You are not to ask questions. You are to answer them. Where did you last see your daughter?

RAMBHA

She was preparing to go to meet a friend.

JUDGE

Where was she to meet this friend?

RAMBHA

In the Old Flower Garden.

JUDGE

The name of the friend ?

RAMBHA

Surely, your worship, that is not a fit question for your worship to ask ?

JUDGE

No hesitation. The law asks the question.

PROVOST

Speak out, there is no harm in saying it. The law asks the question.

RAMBHA

Well then, gentlemen, to tell the truth, as you insist upon it, and the very own truth it is (not that I ever spoke otherwise), the friend is a good gentleman who is the son of Sagaradatta, who was the son of the Provost Vinayaddatta, whose own name is Charadutta. He lives near the Exchange. My daughter went to meet him this morning in the Old Flower Garden. Where is my daughter ?

SAMSTHANAKA.

You hear, judges : let this be set down in writing. It is Charadutta whom I have accused. You see that he is guilty.

PROVOST

He is her friend : what is more natural than that she should go to meet him ?

RAMBHA

My lords, tell me where is my daughter ?

[CHARADUTTA *enters with the* OFFICER.

RECORDER

Here is Charadutta : such straight features could never hide a crooked mind.

JUDGE

Sir, be seated. Officer, a seat.

OFFICER

It is here. Be seated, sir.

SAMSTHANAKA

All this pother for a woman-killer ! But never mind.

JUDGE

Noble Charadutta, I have to ask you if any intimacy or connection has ever subsisted between you and the daughter of this woman ?

CHARADUTTA

What woman ?

JUDGE

This.

CHARADUTTA [*rising*]

Lady, I salute you.

RAMBHA

Sir, is it you that . . .

JUDGE

Be silent. And now tell me, Charadutta, were you ever acquainted with Vasantasena?

[CHARADUTTA *hesitates.*

SAMSTHANAKA

See how modest he is or pretends to be! But it is a cloak, a cloak.

PROVOST

Do not hesitate, Charadutta. There is a charge against you.

CHARADUTTA

What if Vasantasena were my friend?

JUDGE

No evasion, Charadutta. The law obliges you to speak out, and to speak the whole truth.

CHARADUTTA

First tell me who is my accuser.

SAMSTHANAKA [*rising*]

I am.

CHARADUTTA [*contemptuously*]

You! Then it is a serious matter.

SAMSTHANAKA

A serious matter indeed. What! Do you think you are going to rob and murder a woman and that no one is ever to know of it?

CHARADUTTA

Are you out of your mind? What do you mean?

JUDGE

Enough of this. Tell me, was Vasantasena your friend?

CHARADUTTA

She was, she is. Why do you say she was? Tell me what all this means?

SAMSTHANAKA

You see his agitation? Guilt will out.

JUDGE

When did you last see her?

CHARADUTTA

At her house last night.

JUDGE

And what appointment did she make with you?

CHARADUTTA

Appointment?

JUDGE

You are to answer.

CHARADUTTA

I promised to meet her at noon to-day in the Old Flower Garden.

SAMSTHANAKA

You hear, judges; you hear him confess his crime?

CHARADUTTA

Sirs, what is this talk of crime? You want to make me believe that some terrible thing has happened to Vasantasena. But you will not tell me what it is? Why do you torture me?

SAMSTHANAKA

You hear the guilty wretch? He betrays himself.

JUDGE

Be silent, both of you. And tell me, Charadutta, did you meet Vasantasena at noon in the Old Flower Garden as you had appointed?

CHARADUTTA

I did not.

JUDGE

Why?

CHARADUTTA

I was unavoidably prevented.

PROVOST

This sounds strange.

JUDGE

You were prevented from keeping such an appointment? What prevented you?

CHARADUTTA

I cannot tell you.

JUDGE

I must insist upon an answer.

CHARADUTTA

I cannot answer you.

JUDGE

You endanger your life by your silence. For the sake of your honour I command you to answer.

CHARADUTTA

It is my honour that forbids me to answer.

SAMSTHANAKA

Listen to him, my lord. He has confessed all. He was going to the garden, he did not go to the garden, he cannot say where he went when he did not go to the garden. He is condemned out of his own mouth. Give sentence on him.

JUDGE

My lord, I am the judge here and not you. I am here to weigh truth and falsehood, to hear evidence, and to learn truth. Sit down in your place and be silent.

RECORDER [*to* PROVOST]

It is strange that Charadutta will not answer.

PROVOST

It is so much against him.

JUDGE

Have the officers returned from the garden?

OFFICER

They are here, my lord.

JUDGE

Let them come forward.

[*An* OFFICER *comes forward*]

Tell me what you have seen and done.

OFFICER

We went with haste, my lord, to the Old Flower Garden, and we found that the body of a woman had been there, but beasts of prey had seized upon it and devoured it.

JUDGE

How do you know that it was the body of a woman ?

OFFICER

By the remains of the hair, and the marks of the hands and feet.

RAMBHA

O Vasantasena is really and truly dead, and I am alive to hear it ? Accursed be the evil-doer that has done it. Is it you, beggar and murderer ?

[*She shakes her fist at* CHARADUTTA.

CHARADUATTA [*as if stunned*]

Dead ! dead ! Vasantasena dead !

PROVOST

Do you hear what he says ? He does not know what he is saying.

JUDGE

Charadutta, you are accused by the Prince Saṁsthanaka of the murder of Vasantasena : have you any defence to make ?

CHARADUTTA

Dead ! and I might have saved her.

RECORDER

He means he might have repented in time.

JUDGE

Answer me : have you any defence to make ?

CHARADUTTA

None.

JUDGE

Where were you at the time of the murder ?

CHARADUTTA

I cannot tell you.

JUDGE

Do you then plead guilty ?

CHARADUTTA

No.

JUDGE [*to* SAMSTHANAKA]

Why do you accuse Charadutta? What proof have you of your accusation?

SAMSTHANAKA

My lord, what proof can there be but one? The jewels of Vasantasena!

JUDGE

If they had been found, but they have not been found.

SAMSTHANAKA

They have not been sought for. Where should they be but in the house of Charadutta? Send officers, my lords, to the house of Charadutta; see whether the jewels that Vasantasena was accustomed to wear are not to be found there. Those jewels, if they are found in that impoverished house, will speak the truth louder than I, they will at once prove the crime and show the reason of the crime.

CHARADUTTA

Let my guilt rest on this question. Search my house, and if a single jewel of Vasantasena is found there, let me be held guilty of a viler thing than murder.

JUDGE

Go, let the house be searched. (OFFICERS *go out.*) Again, Charadutta, it is for your sake that I search fully into the

matter. Innocence fears no exposure, and though the evidence so far is against you I do not doubt that this last accusation will turn to your favour.

CHARADUTTA

How can I care any longer if I am found guilty or innocent if Vasantasena is really dead ?

SAMSTHANAKA

It is the hypocrite who speaks. Wait, you will see the hypocrite confounded, the robber disclosed, the murderer convicted.

RAMBHA

This is a matter, my lords, in which it would be well for you to call me as a witness.

SAMSTHANAKA

Do not listen to her ; what has she to do with this matter ? This is a fact to be made evident ; not an argument to be decided.

JUDGE

Charadutta, do you desire the evidence of Vasantasena's mother ?

CHARADUTTA

I need no evidence. I await the test.

RAMBHA

Very well, my good sir. I have no wish to press into the company of my betters, whether it be to do good to them or to do harm to them. I am sure it is Prince Samsthanaka who knows all about it, and what he finds out will be sure to be the truth.

[*She looks impudently at* SAMSTHANAKA.

JUDGE

Has the officer returned from the house of Charadutta?

[*An* OFFICER *carrying the toy cart containing the jewels of* VASANTASENA *comes forward, followed by* MAITREYA *in great agitation.* MAITREYA *thrusts himself forward.*

MAITREYA

Friend, peace be with you!

CHARADUTTA

Perhaps I shall find it again.

MAITREYA

What is this? Why are you here? Why have these men forced their way into your house?

JUDGE

Be silent there, and let the officer come forward and deliver his report.

OFFICER

My lords, I went to the house of Charadutta, and this man offered violent resistance to my entry. I went in, and had not searched long before I found, thrust aside into a corner as if to escape observation, a child's toy-cart filled with jewels. It is here.

[*He hands it to the* JUDGE.

JUDGE

What is this, Charadutta ?

CHARADUTTA

Either I am bewitched . . .

JUDGE [*to* RAMBHA]

Are these the jewels of your daughter ?

[SAMSTHANAKA *gets up and goes down as if to examine them.*

RAMBHA

I must see them closely : give them into my hands ; my eyes are old.

SAMSTHANAKA [*significantly*]

Tell the truth.

JUDGE

Are these ornaments your daughter's ?

RAMBHA [*peering into them*]

They are very like, I would not be saying they are the same.

SAMSTHANAKA

Fifty suvarnas if you tell the truth.

PROVOST

Surely you will know them if they are your daughter's ?

RAMBHA [*to* SAMSTHANAKA]

I want a hundred. Well, well, it is difficult to trust one's eyes, what with these cunning workmen. They are very like.

SAMSTHANAKA [*aside*]

A hundred then.

JUDGE

You cannot declare on oath that they are not your daughter's ?

RAMBHA

My lord, I have no doubt about them now. I have recognised them by a secret sign. They are my daughter's.

JUDGE [*to* CHARADUTTA]

Does she speak the truth ?

CHARADUTTA

Yes.

JUDGE

How have they come into your possession ?

CHARADUTTA

I do not know. Some enemy has done this.

JUDGE

Again you will not answer me.

CHARADUTTA

I have nothing to answer. The gods are in league against me. (*He looks wildly round him and says as if speaking to himself:*) I seem to be dreaming, and yet I am awake, and you are the judge, and you are debating about my life, and Vasantasena is dead, and yet I cannot awaken.

JUDGE

Officer, remove him from his seat.

[OFFICER *takes his seat from* CHARADUTTA.

CHARADUTTA

Do you see, Maitreya? I must not sit down before these lords or, if I do, only in the dust. But what does it matter?

MAITREYA [*pointing to* SAMSTHANAKA]

There is the enemy who has done this!

SAMSTHANAKA [*laughing scornfully*]

Little Brahmin, have a care. Your virtuous friend there has killed Vasantasena and robbed her of her jewels, and if you are not careful I will have you arrested for helping him in the matter.

MAITREYA

Son of an adultress, monkey tricked out with gold, stuffed stock of vices, it is you, you, who dare to accuse this man who has never plucked a flower roughly from its stalk—you accuse him of a crime more hateful than has ever been seen in this world! I will break your head into a thousand pieces with this staff, as knotty and crooked as your own heart! If I could only say what I know!

SAMSTHANAKA

Listen, my lords, to this suspicious violence. They are in league together.

CHARADUTTA

Maitreya, my friend, be silent. For my sake.

JUDGE

Stay, let your inconsiderate friend give witness on your behalf. I see only one chance for you. Sir, you seem by your language to be an intimate friend of Charadutta?

MAITREYA

I am his slave: he is my benefactor.

JUDGE

Well and good. And you are frequently in his company?

MAITREYA

He is rarely out of my sight.

JUDGE

Were you with Charadutta at noon to-day?

MAITREYA

Yes—no.

[CHARADUTTA *looks at him fixedly, and slightly raises his hand.*

JUDGE

You were not?

MAITREYA

No.

JUDGE

Where was Charadutta at that hour?

[CHARADUTTA *looks at him more fixedly.*

MAITREYA [*slowly*]

I do not know.

SAMSTHANAKA

Judge, pass sentence. Is there further cause for delay?

JUDGE [*speaks aside with* PROVOST *and* RECORDER, *then rises*]

Charadutta, it rests now only with you to confess the crime which has been proved against you. The evidence is complete, the charge has been substantiated on every point, and

you can give no account of yourself at the time when the murder must have been committed. That which has seemed to our minds incredible, has none the less been proved to the conviction of our minds. It is better, at the last moment, to admit the truth, rather than to add falsehood to dishonour. Charadutta, are you guilty of the murder of Vasantasena ?

CHARADUTTA

I am of a race incapable of crime. But what is it to me if I am innocent and a crime is imputed to me which I cannot gainsay ? If Vasantasena is dead, of what use is life to me ? Have your way. What is it I am to say after you ?

SAMSTHANAKA

That you killed Vasantasena : say that you killed her.

CHARADUTTA

You have said it.

SAMSTHANAKA

Sentence, my lord.

JUDGE

Charadutta, you have confessed that you are guilty of the murder of Vasantasena. This is your sentence : the ornaments of Vasantasena be hung about your neck, and that you be conducted by beat of drum to the place of execution in the southern cemetery, and that you be there beheaded by the public executioner, and your body impaled upon a stake

for a warning to all malefactors in the kingdom of our supreme lord and king.

SAMSTHANAKA

Let the king's justice be done.

CHARADUTTA

Let the justice of the gods be done.

[*The curtain falls as the* OFFICERS *lay hold on* CHARADUTTA.

## ACT V

*A place of execution, an open space at the cross roads, by the side of the public cemetery. A crowd is assembled.*

First Bystander

Are they nearly here?

Second Bystander

Nearly. The Chandalas are leading Charadutta by way of the four stations, and at each station they read the proclamation. He must be nearer now to the fourth than to the third.

First Bystander

What a pilgrimage! The shame will be more to him than death itself. He was the proudest man in the city.

Second Bystander

Do you believe he is really guilty?

First Bystander

How is it possible either to doubt or believe it?

Third Bystander

I salute you, neighbours. Are you here for the ceremony? They tell me it is not the only one. Is it true that Aryaka has escaped?

SECOND BYSTANDER

It is perfectly true. He has got through the gates, nobody knows how. They flock to him from all sides.

THIRD BYSTANDER

Do you think anyone here would be averse to a change of dynasty?

FIRST BYSTANDER

Hush! it is better to wait and accept whatever comes to pass. Perhaps Charadutta will be the last victim of Palaka.

SECOND BYSTANDER

Is he not a friend of Aryaka?

THIRD BYSTANDER

Would that Aryaka were here to help him.

FOURTH BYSTANDER

They are coming, they are coming.

A CHILD

Lift me up, father. I want to see them. The man is hung all over with garlands. Are they going to offer him up to the gods?

FOURTH BYSTANDER

Yes, my son.

CHILD

But I do not see any priests. Why does he carry a sharp stake over his shoulder?

FOURTH BYSTANDER

You will see presently. Get down now, and wait till the Chandalas stop here. This is the best place for seeing.

FIRST BYSTANDER

Is this the face of a criminal? He steps as noble as a beast led to the sacrifice. But it is a sacrifice that will not please the gods.

[CHARADUTTA *appears between the two* CHANDALAS, *garlanded with flowers, like a beast led to the sacrifice, and with the jewels of* VASANTASENA *tied round his neck. He bears on his shoulder the stake with which he is to be impaled. His clothes are covered with dust: his face is pale and weary.*

FIRST CHANDALA

Out of the way, sirs, out of the way for Charadutta, all good people who stand about here to see a man's procession on his way to death. Make way for the executioners of the king, the doers of justice by beheading of living and impaling of dead men. This is Charadutta, who bears the stake and the garland; he goes now on his way to death as a lamp goes out when it has not been replenished with oil.

CHARADUTTA

What are these crows, good Chandala, and why are they croaking about this place?

SECOND CHANDALA

They are before their time, sir; they wait on you. Stand out of the way there, what is there for you to see but a tree that is to be cut down, a good man that is to be cut short by the axe of fate?

CHARADUTTA

The people look kindly on me; I am at least not ashamed before their kind hearts, though I stand here like an ox to be slaughtered; they cannot help me in this life, but I can see that they pray that my fortune in my next life may be better than it has been in this.

FIRST CHANDALA

Out of the way, sirs, back; what do you want to see? There are four things not to be looked at: Indra when he bends his bow, a cow when she gives birth to her calf, a shooting star, and a good man when he is leaving this life. But look you, brother, a hint, the whole city is under sentence; can the sky weep without a cloud?

SECOND CHANDALA

No, brother Goha, the sky cannot weep without a cloud, but this cloud is a cloud of women-folk, and the rain falls from their eyes, and cannot so much as lay the dust.

CHARADUTTA

Why do all these pity me and cry, Alas! poor Charadutta? I am to die, and not one of them can help me.

FIRST CHANDALA

Let all men hear the proclamation of the king. First, let the drum be beaten.

[*The drum is beaten*]

And now hear, all of ye. This is Charadutta, the son of Sagaradatta, the son of the Provost Vinayadatta, by whom Vasantasena the courtesan has been robbed and murdered. The spoil has been found in his hands, and he has confessed his crime with his own mouth. He has been convicted and condemned to death in the name of King Palaka; so will the king punish all malefactors accursed in this life and the next.

CHARADUTTA

O Chandalas, how is it that your hands defile a name that has been made sacred to the gods, age after age, by priests about a sacred fire? But now, my friends turn from me; they hide their faces in their cloaks. Once every stranger desired to be my friend!

FIRST CHANDALA

Every man loves him that is in prosperity, and him that is in adversity he forsakes. Does this surprise you, and yet you are a wise man?

CHARADUTTA

O Maitreya, why does not my one friend come to fulfil my last wishes ?

SECOND CHANDALA

Are you ready, sir, and if you are ready will you come a little further along ?

VOICES [*behind the scenes*]

Father ! father ! Charadutta !

CHARADUTTA

Chandalas, will you grant me one favour ?

FIRST CHANDALA

What ! will you take a favour from *us* ?

CHARADUTTA

You are of the caste of the Chandalas, but you are gentler than the king, who is a Brahmin. Hear me, good friends. Let me see the face of my child before I die.

THE VOICE [*within*]

Father !

FIRST CHANDALA

It shall be done. Make way there : let him pass. This way, sir.

[MAITREYA *makes his way through the crowd, leading* ROHASENA.

MAITREYA

Quick, child, quick, or your father will be dead before we come to him.

ROHASENA

Father! father!

CHARADUTTA

My son! Alas, child, will you leave me as thirsty in the other world as I am now? Such little hands as yours, what food and drink can they offer upon my grave?

MAITREYA

Friend, is it too late to speak now? Let me speak, tell all, and save you.

CHARADUTTA

These Chandalas can take my life: would you take my honour?

ROHASENA

Where are you taking my father, you wicked Chandalas?

FIRST CHANDALA

Hark ye, my boy, they who are born Chandalas are not the only ones. There are Chandalas who do evil to good men.

ROHASENA

Then why are you killing my father?

SECOND CHANDALA

It is the king's order; it is his fault, not ours.

ROHASENA

Kill me and let my father go.

FIRST CHANDALA

A long life to you, my brave child.

CHARADUTTA

The essence of the world is mine: such treasure belongs to the poor man as well as to the rich. I have one friend, and in him I shall live twice over.

MAITREYA

One friend indeed: here's another. Pray, master Chandalas, one body is as good as another to your trade: let my friend's go: you can have mine.

CHARADUTTA

What have I said? I thought adversity left a man without a friend, and here are two of them!

FIRST CHANDALA

Now then, stand back, all of you. What do you want to see now? A good man who has fallen into darkness, like a bucket of gold when the rope is broken and it falls into the well!

CHARADUTTA

They are going to beat the drum: it tells the time when I am to die. O child, if I had but something to leave you! I have only the cord of the Brahmin, and I will take it from my shoulder and put it over yours. It is not made of gold or jewels, but a Brahmin who wears the cord is the mate of the gods and can talk with them face to face.

ROHASENA [*pointing to the jewels round* CHARADUTTA'S *neck*]

Father, give me back my jewels.

CHARADUTTA

They are not yours, dear child, and they are not mine. I cannot give them to you.

ROHASENA

But yes, they are mine, a lady gave them to me.

CHARADUTTA

What lady?

ROHASENA

I don't know, a beautiful lady. She put them into my toy cart because it wasn't the gold one.

MAITREYA

What is this! Tell me all about it, child! Quick! you shall be cleared of this charge after all, Charadutta!

ROHASENA [*crying*]

I don't know, I don't know.

CHARADUTTA

My friend, I begin to understand something of this mystery, but it is too late to matter, and now it only adds to my misery. Was not this, which has been part of the noose of fate in snaring me, but some lovely secret deed of Vasantasena, and Vasantasena is dead, and what does it all matter now? Say nothing, Maitreya, death is welcome, and now it will come with more sweetness.

[*The drum is beaten on a sign from the* CHANDALAS, *and they come nearer to* CHARADUTTA, *who is about to say farewell to his son. At the sound of the drum a passage is suddenly opened in the crowd, and armed men come forward, followed by* SAMSTHANAKA. *They fall back: he comes insolently forward.*

SAMSTHANAKA

Why do you beat the death-drum before I am ready to look on my enemy dying? I was feasting in my palace, when I heard your voices, Chandalas, as harsh as a cracked bell, and the first beat of the death-drum. But the destruction of an enemy is a better feast than has ever been served in any palace. What a crowd has come together, and merely to see this man die! If so many flock together to see this beggar die, how great a concourse would there be if it were a great personage, like myself, that was to be put to death. He is decked out for the slaughter like a young

bull, he is turned to the south to die. But why is not the proclamation said over again? I would have it said over and over again, until everybody has heard it. I would have Charadutta say it over with his own mouth. Chandalas, why have you delayed the execution so long?

First Chandala

My lord, we cannot both delay and hasten. If you would be quicker than we, that do but do our trade by rote, why, sir, do it yourself. Will you have my axe, or my fellow's?

[*He lifts the axe high in the air.* Samsthanaka *steps back hurriedly.*

Rohasena [*to* Samsthanaka]

Kill me and let my father go.

Samsthanaka

Put down your axe, down, edge to the earth, not that way. Who is the child?

Second Chandala

He is the son of Charadutta.

Samsthanaka

Kill them both.

Charadutta

Go home, my child. Who knows what this madman will do? Maitreya, take him with you into safety. He must live, and not be dishonoured by my shame.

MAITREYA

O my friend, do you think that I mean to outlive you ?

CHARADUTTA

Friend, you are alive, and no power forbids you to live. Do not cast away what is not yours to give or take.

MAITREYA

I will put the child into a place of safety, and then, then I will come back and share your fate.

[*He falls at* CHARADUTTA'S *feet, embraces him, and is going to lead away the child.*

SAMSTHANAKA

Stop ! I said, kill them both, father and son.

[CHARADUTTA *lifts his hands in terror.*

FIRST CHANDALA

The king's orders concerned the father, not the son. We carry out our orders. Off with you, boy !

[*They thrust* MAITREYA *and* ROHASENA *away into the crowd.*

SAMSTHANAKA

As you will. I am concerned only to do justice. But, as many here present look as if they do not believe that this crime was committed by Charadutta, I call upon him, as he is an honest man, to say now before them all : I, Charadutta, killed Vasantasena. He will not speak. Strike him Chandalas, as if he were a drum, with your drum-sticks.

First Chandala

Are you not going to speak, Charadutta?

Charadutta

Strike, if you will. Your axe will strike harder presently. I am afraid neither of you nor of death; only of one thing: that this thing may be remembered against me, and it may be said that I killed the woman whom I loved.

Samsthanaka

Confess, confess. Speak the truth at last!

Charadutta

What shall I say that I may have peace in my death? That I am a malefactor, that I hated this woman, and that by me this woman. . . . Let this man say the rest.

Samsthanaka

Was murdered.

Charadutta

So be it.

First Chandala

Come: it is you who have to execute the prisoner.

Second Chandala

No, the turn is yours.

First Chandala

Let us reckon. (*They begin to calculate on their fingers.*) Well, if it is my turn I shall be in no hurry about it.

Second Chandala

Why so ?

First Chandala

I will tell you. My father, when about to depart this life to a better, being in the exercise of like functions with ours, a gentle-hearted stemman ; my father said to me : Son, when you have a heading business in hand, go about it cautiously, deliberately, do nothing in a hurry. And why ? Because, said he, some good man may come forward and pay down the price of his head ; or a son at the very next moment of time be born to the king, and a general pardon proclaimed ; or an elephant may break loose, and the prisoner may get clean off in the confusion ; or (who knows ?) there may be a change of rulers, and everybody in prison be set at liberty.

Samsthanaka

A change of rulers ! What are you lingering over, Chandalas ? To your work, sirs.

First Chandala

Have patience, my lord ; we are reckoning which of us two is to do the work.

SAMSTHANAKA

Is there an elephant on earth more slow-footed than justice ?
How long am I to wait on your pleasure ?

[*He walks up and down impatiently.*

FIRST CHANDALA

Noble Charadutta, we but do our duty, and duty must be done. Before you kneel down at this block, and after asking your pardon, is there anything you wish to think of or speak out ?

CHARADUTTA

If virtue prevail in the world, I ask of the gods that my fair fame may some day be restored by Vasantasena, whether from heaven above or on this earth. Now do your duty.

FIRST CHANDALA

Do you see this block ?

CHARADUTTA

Too well.

FIRST CHANDALA

Those that see it as close as you see it now have not much longer to live.

[CHARADUTTA *recoils*]

Are you afraid, Charadutta ?

CHARADUTTA

Of dishonour, not of death.

First Chandala

Sir, in heaven itself the sun and moon are not free from change and suffering: how should we, in this lower world, escape them? One man rises but to fall, another falls to rise; and the vesture of this carcase is at one time laid aside and taken up again at another. Lay these things to your heart, and be firm. My hand also shall be firm, and the axe shall fall but once. Now must the proclamation be made for the last time. Goha, repeat it.

Second Chandala

This is Charadutta, the son of Sagaradatta, the son of the Provost Vinayadatta, by whom Vasantasena the courtesan has been robbed and murdered. The spoil has been found in his hands, and he has confessed his crime with his own mouth. He has been convicted and condemned to death, and we are now to put him to death in the name of King Palaka: so will the king punish all malefactors, accursed in this life and in the next.

First Chandala

Kneel down: your neck so: sir, let me arrange your last comfort.

[*He sets the head of* Charadutta *carefully on the block. There has been a movement in the crowd, cries of* "Make way!" *and the* Mendicant Friar *leading* Vasantasena *by the hand appears suddenly through the crowd, as* Charadutta, *his head lying on the block, says:*

CHARADUTTA

The gods are mighty.

MENDICANT

Make way there, good people, in the name of charity. Make way!

[*The* FIRST CHANDALA *has raised his axe: at the stir in the crowd the* SECOND CHANDALA *arrests his arms.*

SECOND CHANDALA

Hold. Someone is coming, it may be from the king.

FIRST CHANDALA

I see only a begging friar and a dishevelled woman.

CRIES

Make way there, make way!

CHARADUTTA [*from the block*]

Good Chandala, I have composed myself for death. Make haste to end this waiting.

VASANTASENA [*crying from the crowd*]

Stop! stop! in the gods' name, stop.

FIRST CHANDALA

Who is this woman that cries and runs like a wounded beast?

VASANTASENA

Stop! it is I. It is I. It is Vasantasena.

FIRST CHANDALA

Can this be Vasantasena?

SECOND CHANDALA

Charadutta seems to say so.

[CHARADUTTA *has risen from the block, and stands swaying helplessly.* VASANTASENA *runs up to him, and puts her arms round him as if to support him.*

VASANTASENA

It is I, it is Vasantasena. Look at me. I am not too late?

VOICES IN THE CROWD

It is Vasantasena!

CHARADUTTA

Are you alive or dead, Vasantasena?

VASANTASENA

I am alive. But you, but you? I have run, I have run, to save you.

VOICES IN THE CROWD

It is a miracle. Vasantasena is alive.

CHARADUTTA

I think we have both died, but you have brought me to life again.

SAMSTHANAKA

If the dead come to life, where shall I hide from the sight of them? And if she be not dead, where shall I hide from the sight of justice?

[*He turns to go. The* CHANDALAS *lay hold on him.*

FIRST CHANDALA

Sir, you are to remain here.

SAMSTHANAKA

This to me, hound? Let me go.

SECOND CHANDALA

Our orders are from the king, and if this woman has come back from the dead, it is you that must say who sent her there.

[*They lay hold of him.*

VASANTASENA

I thought I had died for you, and it was hard, because I loved you with all my life; and is there any love in the grave? But you too, would you have died for me?

CHARADUTTA

Look, Vasantasena! are not these garlands woven for my death more like bridal garlands? Cannot the death drums play marriage music as well?

VASANTASENA

Let me die again, only let me hear those words! But what is it they have done to you, and who is it that has sought your life?

CHARADUTTA

They said I had killed you, and for these jewels, which I wear now for punishment; your jewels.

VASANTASENA

Ah, the toy cart!

CHARADUTTA

They have brought me through anguish to this joy.

VASANTASENA [*turning and catching sight of* SAMSTHANAKA, *shrieks:*]

The murderer!

SAMSTHANAKA [*trying to fall on his knees*]

Forgive me, Vasantasena.

*The* CHANDALAS *hold him up so that he cannot go down on his knees.*

First Chandala

Stand up, sir, like a man.

[*Again there is a stir in the crowd, and* Maitreya *bursts through, almost breathless.*

Maitreya

Charadutta, you will be saved! I have come. . . .

[*Stops as he sees* Vasantasena]

Charadutta

Vasantasena has already saved me.

Maitreya

This is a day of miracles. But hear, and not you alone, Charadutta, hear, all of you, Chandalas, guards, people: Aryaka is king, Palaka is killed, Aryaka reigns in his place! Long live Aryaka!

[*Some in the crowd repeat it, others look at one another in doubt*]

Glory to Siva, glory to the god of battles! I hold the signet ring of Palaka, that Aryaka has taken off his finger. I bring it from Aryaka to Charadutta that he may not only be set free but that he may be next to Aryaka in his kingdom.

Samsthanaka

Alas! woe is me, my brother-in-law is dead, and I am myself no more than a dead man.

MAITREYA

Hold him, Chandalas, in the name of Aryaka. Guards of Samsthanaka, your master is a captive. Aryaka will be your master!

GUARDS

Long live Aryaka!

CHARADUTTA

O Maitreya, then it is not my life only that is saved, but liberty itself. Let us give thanks to the gods.

VOICES

Long live Aryaka! Long live Charadutta!

CHARADUTTA

And now, Vasantasena. . . .

VOICES

Down with the murderer! Send him after Palaka! He would have killed Charadutta!

SAMSTHANAKA

Charadutta, save me! I have no hope but in you.

[*Breaks away from the* CHANDALAS *and grovels before him*]

Save me!

VOICES

Kill him! kill him! Give him to us.

VASANTASENA [*taking the garland from* CHARADUTTA'S *neck and throwing it over* SAMSTHANAKA'S]

Take the death-garland!

SAMSTHANAKA

I die, I die. I kiss your feet, most noble Charadutta, I kiss the dust before your feet. Only save me from death!

VOICES

Give him to us.

CHARADUTTA

Have I power over this man?

VOICES

Yes, yes.

CHARADUTTA

Will you do with him in everything as I bid you?

VOICES

Yes, yes.

CHARADUTTA

Then I bid you with all due haste. . . .

VOICES

To kill him.

CHARADUTTA

No, to set him free.

VOICES

Let him be killed, let him be killed.

CHARADUTTA

Vasantasena, why is he to be set free ?

VASANTASENA [*taking the garland from the neck of* SAMSTHANAKA, *and throwing it on the ground*]

Samsthanaka, your punishment shall be the mercy of Charadutta.

CHARADUTTA

Vasantasena has said it. Loose him and let him go.

SAMSTHANAKA [*rising*]

Gods ! I am alive again.

[*He goes out.*

MENDICANT

After all I did well to help a woman, though it is against the rules of my order.

VASANTASENA

This was my helper, when I was nearly dead. He led me into safety.

CHARADUTTA

What shall we do for this good friar?

MENDICANT

Give me leave to go begging about the world in the old way: my masters, save me and your own selves from the misery of riches!

[*He goes out.*

VOICES

They are coming this way! Aryaka and the soldiers are coming this way! Let us go and see them.

[*All run out, leaving* CHARADUTTA *alone with* VASANTASENA *and* MAITREYA.

CHARADUTTA

Shall we follow these children? They go to see a new thing, having forgotten the thing now past. But here is a man and woman who have seen death, each for the sake of the other; and only by life can death be forgotten. When we find Aryaka we will bid him to our marriage-feast.

VASANTASENA [*kissing his hand*]

My lord!

CURTAIN

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